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The Mediterranean in the Seventeenth Century
M. Rozen
Minna Rozen
The Mediterranean
in the Seventeenth Century:
Captives, Pirates and Ransomers
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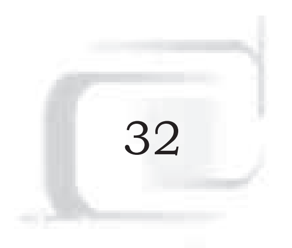


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PREFACE

The present work began with an invitation to a conference that took place in September 2013 at the University of Paderborn, Germany. The topic was «The Ransom of Prisoners in the Mediterranean: An Interreligious Comparison».

At the conference, I gave a lecture that was later published in the proceedings: Minna Rozen, *The Redemption of Jewish Captives in the seventeenth century Eastern Mediterranean Basin: The Intersection of Religion, Economics, and Society*, Heike Grieser and Nicole Priesching (eds.), *Gefangenenloskauf im Mittelmeerraum. Ein interreligiöser Vergleich*, George Olms Verlag, Hildesheim-Zürich-New York, 2015, pp. 161-190, 335-350.

The discussions that took place during that conference forced me to confront a dizzying array of questions that went beyond the purview of my topic, which was somewhat technical in nature and pertained to how Jewish charitable societies that redeemed captives in the Mediterranean basin funded their activities and transferred monies.

In contrast to the title of the conference, the questions that arose were more suprareligious and supranational than they were interreligious and international. Thus, for example, a question that arose was: What was the basic motivation to redeem captives in all societies and religions? Some of the participants felt that the motive was always, at its core, religious. That is, one would want to redeem a coreligionist from being held captive by someone of another religion. Others (I among them) felt that the redemption of captives became a business in every respect, and the religious injunction

ultimately constituted a premise for conducting a worldwide business with different nationalities and religions in which the main commodity was human beings.

Another question that arose was whether activities on behalf of captives actually played a role in enabling such transactions. Some participants who viewed the religious motive as the main impetus for redeeming captives felt that the ransoms fueled maritime piracy and further captures, and that the right thing to do would have been to refuse to pay the ransoms. This idea contradicts the original notion, namely, that redeeming captives is a religious commandment. Another question was whether it would even have been possible to conduct maritime trade in the early modern era had those involved not been hopeful that someone would liberate them if they were captured.

The conference participants did not arrive at any consensus or reach any conclusions regarding these questions. I myself continued to ponder these issues on my long journey home to Israel, adding more questions that arise every day in the news: What should a modern country that accepts international law do when its citizens or soldiers are held captive by organizations that do not see themselves as being bound by international law? Should it negotiate with them over the lives of the captives? But such negotiations would lead to the capture of more people! I was unable to discuss these questions during the conference, and so I wrote the present work.

The purpose of this essay is to examine the positions taken by various early-modern states, religions, and organizations on the redeeming of captives in light of the following question: Which played the more important role - piety and religious imperatives, or the opportunity for many people to make a living and even get rich from the activities surrounding the redemption of captives? The answer to this question can help when grappling with such contemporary quandaries as: Should a shipping company bargain with a gang of pirates that have no relation to a specific country over the redemption of their boat, cargo, or sailors that fell captive to them? One should remember that today the boat and cargo are the main goal of the pirates. If the shipping company does not redeem the crew, they will be murdered. One can also ask another question: Should a country negotiate with irrational religious organizations over citizens that fell captive to them? This article does not answer these questions directly, but it can offer important insights.

Another reason for writing this essay was to give proper attention to the documents that I used when preparing the lecture for the Paderborn conference, which are republished here. In the proceedings, I was only able to publish the translations of the documents in English, with barely any academic apparatus. Here the original Hebrew appears alongside the translation, and with a complete scholarly apparatus. The publication of the letters in this form allows the researcher and reader to see the multilayered cultural history of Mediterranean Jewry, from the Bible, through the Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, and Midrashim, to the Babylonian Ge'onim, the sages of Italy and North Africa, the sages of pre-Expulsion Spain, and finally the rabbis of the Spanish diaspora. These letters, as published here, offer an archaeological cross-section of the Judaism of the Mediterranean basin through the centuries, culminating in the period when they were written, in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

I am grateful to the organizer of the conference in Paderborn, Prof. Dr. Heike Greizer, who agreed to this expanded and annotated edition of the letters.

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INTRODUCTION

This study examines captivity emanating from piracy or violence linked to maritime hostilities, and its consequences in the Mediterranean world of the seventeenth century. It first addresses the issue of the rise of piracy in this period, discussing the various explanations that have been proffered, then proceeds to the primary subject of the study - the captivity of Jews from the Adriatic coast eastwards, the financial aspects of their ransom, and the social ramifications. Placing these in the broader Jewish context of the Mediterranean and the countries of Western Europe as a whole, it concludes with a comparison of the practices of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim ransom of captives during the period under discussion.

The terms captive and captivity are used here in a generic sense, although people held in captivity as a result of maritime violence between sea craft belonging to bellicose nations were not always of the same status. They could be soldiers; sailors who served on a captured ship; state officials or their family members; or lastly, simple civilians - ordinary passengers who chose this risky way of moving from one place to another. The differences in their status affected their prospects of redemption, and sometimes their treatment at the hands of their captors. But whether they were treated as hostages, human merchandise awaiting sale, prisoners of war, or slaves, they all shared one common denominator: they all lost their individual freedom. As opposed to members of other nations, Jews were almost always ordinary passengers, and in most cases were regarded and treated as slaves until ransomed by their coreligionists[1].

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[1] On the various definitons of captives see A. Pelizza, *Riammessi a respirare l'aria tranquilla: Venezia e il riscatto degli schiavi in età moderna*, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Venezia, 2013, p. x.

The redemption of captives is defined in Jewish culture as an action taken to bring about the release of any Jew being held prisoner by non-Jews. Captivity is considered worse than death: «And if they ask you, 'Where shall we go?' say to them, 'Thus said the LORD: Those destined for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for hunger, to hunger; those for captivity, to captivity' (Jer 15:2)». According to a rabbinic dictum, «Each portion of this verse is harsher than the one before: a sword is harsher than death, hunger is harsher than the sword, (and) captivity is harsher than all of them, for all are contained in it»[2]. For this reason, Maimonides stated: «There is no greater mitzvah [religious commandment] than the redemption of captives»[3].

The redeeming of captives is considered one of the loftiest expressions of solidarity amongst Jews. In Jewish society and culture, a conscious assumption exists that financial, ethnic, geographical or political differences are not to be taken into account when performing this *mitzvah*. Guidelines were nonetheless instituted that limited the size of the ransom paid for captives in order to prevent a situation where Jewish prisoners would become too desirable a commodity. Already in the Mishnah (c. 200 CE), it is stated; «Prisoners should not be redeemed for unreasonably high ransoms, for the protection of society [that is, to avoid burdening the community excessively, or encouraging future kidnappings]»[4].

The central questions raised here are: Did the ethos embodied in the religious commandment constitute the driving force behind the Jewish willingness to ransom captives, and what findings does a comparison of Jewish ransom activity with that of non-Jewish societies yield?

2 bBava Batra 8b.

3 Maimonides, *Laws of Charity* 8:10.

4 bGit. 45a; bKetub. 52b; A. Mackler, *Judaism, Justice, and Access to Health Care*, «Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal», 1.2 (1991), pp. 143-161. For an overview of captives redemption in ancient Judaism see C. Hezser, *Der Loskauf von Sklaven und Kriegsgefangenen im antiken Judentum*, in H. Grieser, N. Friesching (eds.), *Gefangegenloskauf im Mittelmeerraum, Ein interreligiöser Vergleich, Akten der Tagung vom 19. bis 21 September 2013 an der Universität Paderborn*, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim-Zürich-New York, 2015, pp. 3-24.

The Mediterranean in the Seventeenth Century:

Captives, Pirates and Ransomers

I

PIRACY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY: ITS REASONS AND PRINCIPAL PROTAGONISTS

The seventeenth century is regarded as the "golden age" of piracy in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic[1]. From the end of the sixteenth century onwards, the Mediterranean witnessed a huge surge in pirate activity[2]. This was paralleled by vast demographic growth in the important pirate centres and trade in pirate spoils in the Mediterranean - Malta, Livorno in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers[3].

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[1] M. Fontenay, *La Méditerranée entre la croix et le croissant*, Classiques Garnier, Paris, 2010, pp. 240-241; M. Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000, pp. 78-79; Id., *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants: A Maritime History of the Mediterranean*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2010, pp. 78-81; A.D. Atauz, *Eight Thousand Years of Maltese Maritime History: Trade, Piracy, and Naval Warfare in the Central Mediterranean*, University Press of Florida, Gainseville, 2008, p. 83; A. Vittorio, *I cavalieri di S. Giovanni nel Mediterraneo in età moderna. Dalla «grandeur» militare alla funizione economica. Itinerario di una ricerca,* in *Cavalieri di San Giovanni e il Mediterraneo, I Convegno Internazionale di Studi Melitensi*, Centro Studi Melitensi, Taranto, 1996, p. 28; A. Blondy, *L'ordre de Saint-Jean et l'essor économique de Malte (1530-1798)*, «Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée», 71 (1994), p. 76.

[2] Fernand Braudel identifies a substantial rise in insurance costs on commodities traded from Venice to the Syrian coast at the beginning of the seventeenth century: F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. 2, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995, p. 880. See also A. Tenenti, *Piracy and the Decline of Venice 1580-1615*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1967; P. Masson, *Histoire du Commerce Francais dans le Levant au XVII Siècle*, Burt Franklin, New York, 1967, pp. 24-47; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté (1530-1670)*, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, Rome, 2005, pp. 253-255.

[3] For Malta, see A.D. Atauz, *Eight Thousand Years* cit., p. 168; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 253-331, 540-548; for Livorno, see F. Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cultural Trade*

The primary locations of the official slave trade in the Christian Mediterranean during the seventeenth century were Naples (at the beginning of the century), the Maltese islands, Messina in Sicily, and Livorno - and in the Muslim Mediterranean: Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers[4]. A multi-branched system of trade and banking arose around the plunder and spoils. Goods were vended, people delivered into hard labour until they were ransomed or died in their chains, and vessels sold to the highest bidder or put into the service of pirate fleets. The ransom of captives was a business in its own right, around which a complex and sophisticated banking system also arose. Local and Tuscan Jews engaged in ransom activities on behalf of Christians taken captive in North Africa, and Christian citizens of the Italian states and France did the same for Jews and Muslims captured in the world of Christendom[5].

The primary protagonists in the eastern Mediterranean were the knights of the Order of St. John of Malta. Many scholars regard

in the Early Modern Period, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2009, p. 57; for North Africa, see B.A. Ogot, *Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 5, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999, pp. 125-126; F. Cresti, *La population d'Alger et son évolution durant l'époque ottomane: Un état des connaissances controversé*, «Arabica», 52.4 (2005), pp. 466-469; A. Raymond, *La conquête ottomane et le développement des grandes villes arabes*, «Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée», 27 (1979), p. 122.

[4] C. Roth, *The Jews of Malta*, «Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England», 12 (1928-1931), pp. 187-251; M. Greene, *Catholic Pirates* cit., p. 93; A. Tenenti, *Piracy* cit., pp. 16-31; G. Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs: France and Slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2011, pp. 84-86; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 358-363; E. Bashan, *Ahrayutam shel yehudey algir ve-london bi-shviyat britim bi-ydei ha-piratim ha-algirayim* [Mutual Responsibility of Jews in Algier and London Concerning Difficulties in Ransoming British Citizens from Algerian Pirates in the Seventeenth Century], in *Mi-mizrah shemesh ʿad mevo'o: Peraqim be-toledot yehudey ha-mizrah ve-ha-magreb, hevrah ve-kalkalah* [Mi-mizrah Shemesh 'ad Mevo'o: Studies in the History of the Jews of the East and the Maghreb, Society and Economy], Orot Yahadut Hamagreb, Lod, 1996, pp. 119-135. For Naples, see A. Salzmann, *Migrants in Chains: On the Enslavement of Muslims in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe*, «Religions», 4 (2013), p. 399.

[5] M. Rozen, *Les marchands Juifs livournais* à *Tunis et le commerce avec Marseille* à *la fin du XVIIe siècle*, «Michael», 9 (1985), pp. 90-92; G. Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs* cit., pp. 30, 33-34, 251 note 35; H.Z. Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa*, vol. 2, Brill, Leiden, 1981, pp. 14-18, 24, 94, 207, 216-221, 227-228, 233, 235 note 76, 264, 270; A.H. de Groot, *Ottoman North Africa and the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, «Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée», 39 (1985), p. 133; E. Ginio, *Piracy and Redemption in the Aegean Sea During the First Half of the Eighteenth Century*, «Turcica», 33 (2005), p. 144; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 388-397.

the Order's activities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a residue of the Crusader period, its knights exploiting the struggle between the Christian and Muslim worlds to maintain the Order's raison d'être[6]. While the Order may indeed have sought to preserve a medieval lifestyle that had long since disappeared, this is not sufficient to explain the wave of piracy that swept the region during the seventeenth century[7]. Other pirates of various sorts also existed — such as the knights of the Order of St. Stephen of Pisa, who operated under the patronage of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the Uskok who infested the Adriatic under the aegis of the Habsburgs, English pirates, and those who sailed from Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli in the name of the Ottoman Empire[8].

Diverse theories have been adduced to account for the rise in piracy. Fernand Braudel suggests that

> the suspension of major hostilities in the Mediterranean after 1574 was undoubtedly one cause of the subsequent series of political and social

[6] S. Goodwin, *Malta, Mediterranean Bridge*, Greenwood, Santa Barbara, 2002, pp. 43, 68; A. Knobler, *Holy Wars, Empires, and the Portability of the Past: The Modern Uses of Medieval Crusades*, «Comparative Studies in Society and History», 48.2 (2006), pp 293-325; M. Greene, *Catholic Pirates* cit., pp. 9, 18, 108, 131; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 93-134, 253-254, 275-305, 533-564.

[7] T. Freller, *"Adversus Infideles": Some Notes on the Cavalier's Tour, the Fleet of the Order of St. John, and the Maltese Corsairs*, «Journal of Early Modern History», 12 (1999), pp. 411-429.

[8] For the Order of St. Stephen, see A. Tenenti, *Piracy* cit., pp. 32-55; G. Guarnieri, *I Cavalieri di Santo Stefano nella storia della Marina italiana (1562-1859)*, Nistri-Lischi, Pisa, 1960. For the Uskoks, see *ibid.*, pp. 3-15; C.W. Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry and Holy War in the Sixteenth Century Adriatic*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1992; S. Anselmi (ed.), *Pirati e corsari in Adriatico*, Silvana Editoriale, Cinisello Balsamo, 1998; M.L. De Nicolò, *La pirateria in Adriatico fra Cinque e Settecento*, in *Munus Amicitiae: Scritti per il 70° genetliaco di Floriano Grimaldi*, Tecnostampa, Loreto, 2001, pp. 87-100; M. Orfali, *Ragusa and Ragusan Jews in the Effort to Ransom Captives*, «Mediterranean Historical Review», 17.2 (2002), pp. 19-26: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09518960208559124 (accessed 12.9.2015). For English pirates, see A. Tenenti, *Piracy* cit., pp. 56-86; B. Fuchs, *Faithless Empires: Pirates, Renegadoes, and the English Nation*, «ELH», 67.1 (2000), pp. 45-69. For Ottoman pirates, see P. Masson, *Histoire des Établissements et du Commerce Français dans l'Afrique Barbaresque (1560-1793)*, Librairie Hachette, Paris, 1903, pp. 60-61; S. Bono, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo*, A. Mondadori, Perugia, 1993, pp. 9-42, 85-86; A.Tenenti, *Piracy* cit., pp. 16-31; C.R. Pennel, *Piracy and Diplomacy in Seventeenth-Century North Africa: The Journal of Thomas Baker, English Consul in Tripoli 1677-1685*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, Rutherford, 1989, pp. 25-67; D.J. Vitkus, N.I. Matar (eds.), *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2001; G. Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs* cit.

disturbances, including the increase in brigandage. On the water, the end of conflict between the great states brought to the forefront of the sea's history that secondary form of war, piracy[9].

While many scholars have adopted this thesis, it merely describes a situation without providing a real explanation. Those who have followed in Braudel's wake have sought to fill in the gaps and paint a fuller picture.

Some have posited that the domination of the Mediterranean by the fleets of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Venice during the sixteenth century prevented widespread piracy. After the battle of Lepanto on 7 October 1571, in which the Ottoman navy was defeated by a coalition of Christian European states, the Ottoman Empire lost its fleet and its status fell in the eyes of its North African provinces. The Republic of Venice also suffered serious territorial losses in its wars with the Ottomans, as a result of which its patricians — who had long taken pains to ensure that the Levant trade remained in their hands — began to withdraw from maritime trade in favour of investing in banking, industry, and the acquisition of real estate in *domini di terraferma* — Venice's hinterland. These developments opened up new opportunities for piracy, brigands exploiting the relatively greater freedom to enhance their activities[10].

Following Braudel, one scholarly school continues to maintain that the battle of Lepanto constituted a significant watershed in Mediterranean history, shifting the balance of power that had formerly lain with the Muslim world in favour of Christian Europe, with the Ottoman Empire suffering a blow from which it struggled to recover[11]. This view is consistent with the explanation cited above. Another school stresses that in the five to six months following the battle, Sultan Selim II ordered the building of a new Ottoman fleet without imposing new taxes on the population, Ottoman sources giving no indication that the Empire had lost confidence. On the contrary, Cyprus was finally conquered and Tunis captured in 1574. The Venetian Republic was thus the most affected by the battle of Lepanto, its fleet being devastated to no less an extent than the Ottoman naval force, with no resources available to rebuild it. In order to continue trading with the Ottoman Empire, it was forced to pay extremely high damages and return several of the fortresses it had captured in the Adriatic, as well as accept a limitation on the size of its fleet (sixty galliots).

The fleets of the remainder of the Holy League that fought the Ottomans at Lepanto also suffered heavy blows[12]. Even such a scholar as Maurice Aymard, whose perspective on the Mediterranean is European rather than dependent on Ottoman sources, concludes that the battle of Lepanto was engraved in Western historical memory as a symbol of the victory of the Christian over the Muslim world, despite not changing the face of reality in any significant sense[13].

The arguments marshaled above for the vacuum that led to the burgeoning of piracy in the eastern Mediterranean from the end of the sixteenth century are only partially correct and remain insufficient[14]. Another explanation distinguishes between the flourishing of piracy in the world in general and its growth in the Mediterranean in particular. Molly Greene thus contends that global piracy was linked to the discovery of the New World, the increase in worldwide maritime

[9] F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, vol. 2 cit., pp. 865, 882.

[10] S. Bono, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo* cit., pp. 20-21; W. Kaiser (ed.), *Le commerce des captifs: Les intermédiaires dans l'échange et le rachat des prisonniers en Méditerranée, XVe-XVIIIe siècle*, École Française de Rome, Rome, 2008, p. 13; M. Fontenay, *La Méditerranée* cit., pp. 240-43; T. Freller, *"Adversus Infideles"* cit., pp. 409-410; M. Ressel, *Venice and the Redemption of Northern European Slaves (Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries)*, «Cahiers de la Méditerranée», 85 (2013), pp. 131-145 (my thanks to Magnus Ressel for kindly giving me access to his paper prior to its publication); A. Pelizza, *Riammessi a respirare l'aria tranquilla* cit., pp. 42-43.

[11] F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, vol. 2, p. 1089; D. Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011, pp. 450-453; N. Capponi, *Victory of the West: The Great Christian-Muslim Clash at the Battle of Lepanto*, De Capo Press, Cambridge, MA, 2006.

[12] A.C. Hess, *The Battle of Lepanto and its Place in Mediterranean History*, «*Past and Present*», 57.1 (1972), pp. 53-73; R. Jennings, *Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Cyprus and the Mediterranean World, 1571- 1640*, New York University Press, New York, 1993, pp. 346-348; O. Yildirim, *The Battle of Lepanto and its Impact on Ottoman History and Historiography*, in R. Cancila (ed.), *Mediterraneo in armi (secc. XV-XVIII)*, Quaderni-Mediterranea ricerche storiche, n.4, Associazione no profit "Mediterranea", Palermo, 2007, pp. 533-556; H. Kamen, *Strategies of Survival: Minority Cultures in the Mediterranean*, in J.A. Marino (ed.), *Early Modern History and the Social Sciences: Testing the Limits of Braudel's Mediterranean*, Truman State University Press, Kirksville MO, 2002, p. 205; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 108-111.

[13] M. Aymard, *La Méditerranée ottomane de Fernand Braudel*, in G. Veinstein (ed.), *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps: Actes des IXe rencontres de l'École du Louvre, 7-10 Mars 1990*, La documentation française, Paris, 1992, p. 71. See also A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 107-109.

[14] See V.J. Parry, *The Successors of Sulaiman, 1566-1617*, in M.A. Cook (ed.), *A History of the Ottoman Empire to 1730*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976, p. 109; R. Jennings, *Christians and Muslims* cit., pp. 347-348.

movement, and the conflict between England, The Low Countries, and Spain, whereas piracy in the Mediterranean were prompted by other causes[15]. In her opinion, the view that global interreligious conflict made way for inter-state competition over resources is invalid with respect to the seventeenth-century Mediterranean. She instead links the flourishing of the Maltese knightly order with the purpose for which it was originally founded — namely, the war against Islam[16]. While the Knights of St. John were a remnant of the Crusades, they were resurgent rather than a weak shadow of their former glory due to political developments in the early modern era. France, which had been the Ottoman Empire's principal ally in the Christian world, took the place of the Republic of Venice in Mediterranean trade. Although the latter was a Catholic republic, its traders were first and foremost businessmen, who regarded the Maltese knights as a serious threat to Mediterranean trade. France, by contrast, which aspired to the status of the exclusive representative of Christianity against the Ottoman Empire (symbolizing the Muslim world) and the protector of Catholics under Ottoman rule, exhibited a more conciliatory stance towards the Maltese knights, who also saw themselves as defenders of Catholics[17]. Herein, Greene follows the Romantic school, according to which the Maltese knights were the "guardians" of the borders of the Christian world[18].

The French did in fact have great aspirations in the Levant. A large number of knights were French, and the lion's share of the Order's overseas income came from France, a portion of the Order's fleet also being built in French dockyards[19]. The argument that France accepted the Order's piratical activities due to its ambitions in the

[15] M. Greene, *Catholic Pirates* cit., pp. 78-79.

[16] See especially E. Bradford, *The Shield and the Sword: The Knights of St. John, Jerusalem, Rhodes and Malta*, E.P. Dutton, New York, 1972; G. Scarabelli, *Il ruolo della marina giovannita nel Mediterraneo dal medioevo all'epoca moderna*, in C.D. Fonseca, C. D'Angelo (eds.), *Cavalieri di San Giovanni e il Mediterraneo* cit., pp. 40-45.

[17] M. Greene, *Catholic Pirates* cit., pp. 6-10, 13-14, 52-77.

[18] Cf. the advocates of the order following the French Revolution: Robert Joseph de Maccarthy Levignac, *Rapports politiques de l'Ordre de Malte avec la France, et nécessité de maintenir les traites respectifs entre ces deux puissances*, 1790; L. Legroing de Fontnoble, *Considérations d'un chevalier français sur l'Ordre de Malte, adressées à S. A. S. Monseigneur le Prince de Bénévent, ministre des Affaires Etrangères*, Imprimerie de P. Didotaîné, Paris, 1814.

[19] R.J. Levignac, *Rapports politiques* cit., pp. 60-69; L. Fontnoble, *Considérations d'un chevalier* cit., p. 13; A.D Atauz, *Eight Thousand Years* cit., pp.153-154; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., p.85.

Levant, thus creating the conditions for the sharp rise in piracy in the seventeenth century, requires refining, however. French nobles joined the Order not for religious reasons but because it was the only place left in which they could realize the feudal ideal, justify their existence, and earn an income[20]. Although France was interested in the Levant trade, up until the last quarter of the seventeenth century it was unable to equal the trading conditions provided by the capitulations accorded to England and the Netherlands by the Ottoman Empire[21]. Similarly, while Venice's trade diminished, up until the capitulations granted to France in 1673 it would be inaccurate to claim that it took over the Republic's role in Levantine trade, with the English and Dutch in fact achieving that honour[22]. As long as this remained the case, and especially between 1620 and 1660, a large part of the profits from the Maltese knights' piracy returned to Marseille in various forms — thus giving France no reason to object to it[23]. During this period, the French had one more good reason to disregard the Maltese knights' piracy: The persistent enmity between France and Spain caused the Spanish crown to regard the Order as a hostile entity, treating it as an ally of France[24]. Thus France itself could not treat the Order otherwise. Once the hostilities with Spain ended (1659), this motive disappeared, with France making great efforts to improve its trading conditions in the Levant[25].

From the moment France gained equal status with other trading nations and the right to represent those without any diplomatic representation in the Ottoman court, however, it took pains — very

[20] M. Fontenay, *La Méditerranée* cit., p. 255.

[21] H. Inalcik, *Imtiyazat*, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Brill, Leiden, 1971, pp. 1450-1500; S.A. Skilliter, *The Organization of the First English Embassy in Istanbul in 1583*, «Asian Affairs», 10.2 (1979), pp. 159-165; V.L. Menage, *The English Capitulation of 1580: A Review Article*, «International Journal of Middle East Studies», 12.3 (1980), pp. 373-383; A.C. Wood, *A History of the Levant Company*, Routledge, London/New York, 2013, p. 29; M. Bulut, *The Ottoman Approach to the Western Europeans in the Levant during the Early Modern Period*, «Middle Eastern Studies», 44.2 (2008), pp. 259-274; Id., *The Role of the Ottomans and the Dutch in the Commercial Integration between the Levant and Atlantic in the Seventeenth Century*, «Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient», 45.2 (2002), p. 202; H. Umunc, *The Dutch in the Levant: Trade and Travel in the Seventeenth Century*, «Belleten-Türk Tarih Kurumu», 75.273 (2011), pp. 373-386.

[22] M. Fontenay, *La Méditerranée* cit., pp. 198-199; R. Jennings, *Christians and Muslims* cit., p. 349.

[23] M. Fontenay, *La Méditerranée* cit., pp. 265-266, 299, 323, 335.

[24] A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 491- 495.

[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 510-515.

successfully — to improve its trade balance in the Levant[26]. From that point onwards, it began to view piracy in a very different light. On the eve of the eighteenth century, the French writer Guillet de la Guilletière denounced the Maltese knights, declaring that

> most of the French who reach the shores of Greece come to despoil it. I do not know whether they have license to plunder the infidels and it is not my place to say anything, but what of the miserable Greeks of the archipelagos who are deluged by the acts of hostility taken by our Catholic ships? They have sent an envoy to Rome and accepted letters of patronage that have been put to scorn by these corsairs[27].

After France gained the capitulations of 1673, it put heavy pressure on the Order to desist from its activities against vessels carrying "enemy" — that is, Ottoman subjects' — merchandise, ceasing to view piracy as a noble, divine enterprise[28]. Nor was the French activity against the North African corsairs dictated by religious sentiment. Henry III acted at the Sublime Porte against the attacks by the Algiers corsairs on the Marseille fleet (1585). Prior to his baptism into Catholicism, his Huguenot successor, Henry IV (1589-1610), turned to Murad III for assistance in restraining the rebellious city when Marseille joined the Catholic league. The Sultan responded by commanding the Marseille traders to obey their king on pain of confiscation of their ships and the enslavement of their seamen and passengers (1590)[29].

During the seventeenth century, the activity of the North African pirate nations seriously interfered with Marseille's trade, with the number of French being held captive rising significantly. As a state, France was not quick to ransom captives, leaving this endeavour to private enterprises[30]. It was only during the reign of Louis XIV, when trade with the Levant and North Africa became a significant state issue, that France began to pressure the North African piratical nations to stop their attacks on French vessels[31].

[26] P. Masson, *Histoire du Commerce Français* cit., pp. 409-508.
[27] G. Guillet de Saint-Georges (pseudonym La Guilletière), *Lacédémone ancienne et nouvelle*, Claude Barbin, Paris, 1676, pp. 60-61.
[28] M. Fontenay, *Corsaires de la foi ou rentiers du sol? Les chevaliers de Malte dans le "corso" méditerranéen au XVIIe siècle*, «Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine», 35.3 (1988), pp. 367, 384.
[29] G. Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs* cit., pp. 11-12.
[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 28-51.
[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 52-91. See also below, Chapter Seven.

In light of the burgeoning of piracy in the Western Mediterranean and the fact that this century was also the golden age of piracy in the Atlantic, we must therefore seek the answer to the rise of Mediterranean piracy in a more global perspective[32].

It is commonly agreed that maritime activity experienced a massive increase not only in the Mediterranean but beyond from the late sixteenth century onwards, and even those historians who attach varied levels of importance to the battle of Lepanto concur that piracy, which had always existed in the Mediterranean, reached a new peak during this period. Building and maintaining a strong naval fleet required extensive resources, and most states were not in a position to fund such an enterprise. The preparation for the battle of Lepanto required an enormous effort on the part of all those involved, and the damages sustained were huge. Seventeenth-century states were still not sufficiently strong or organized to undertake operations of this scale or control them for any length of time.

Ultimately, the Venetians relinquished their status in the Mediterranean, the Spaniards similarly preferring to invest in the Atlantic. Surprisingly, the Ottoman Empire — the only well-organized state capable of rebuilding its fleet after the battle of Lepanto — also neglected the Mediterranean at the end of the sixteenth century. Traditionally, they had been forced to fight on two fronts — against the Christian world in the West and the Persians in the East, the latter demanding far more resources than the battle of Lepanto and the rebuilding of the fleet. From the end of the sixteenth century onward, however, they began to acknowledge their inability to restrain the independent operation of the North African piratical states in the Western Mediterranean even as they at-

[32] S. Bono, *Corsari nel Mediterraneo* cit.; Id., *Lumi e Corsari: Europa e Maghreb nel Settecento*, Morlacchi Editore, Perugia, 2005; Id., *Le Maghreb dans l'histoire de la Méditerranée à l'époque Barbaresque (XVIe siècle–1830)*, «Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente», 54.2 (1999), pp. 182-192; D.J. Vitkus, N.I. Matar (eds.), *Piracy* cit.; G. Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs* cit., pp. 15-18; M. Ressel, C. Zwierlein, *The Ransoming of North European Captives from North Africa: A Comparison of the Dutch, Hanseatic and English Institutionalization of Redemption from 1610-1645*, in N. Jaspert, S. Kolditz (eds.), *Seeraub im Mittelmeerraum: Piratrie, Korsarentum und Maritime Gewalt von der Antike bis zur Neuzeit*, Wilhelm Fink/Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn, 2013, pp. 380-384. For the Atlantic, see K.P. McDonald, *Pirates, Merchants, Settlers, and Slaves: Making an Indo-Atlantic Trade World 1640-1730*, PhD thesis, University of California Santa Cruz, 2008; J.I. Israel, *A Diaspora within Diasporas*, Brill, Leiden, 2002, pp. 291-311, 342, 379-381.

tacked their French ally[33]. The growth in English and Dutch maritime activity in the Mediterranean augmenting the corsair activity in the region, it thus became a regular business[34].

Although the Ottoman Empire devoted itself to erecting fortresses against invasion in the Eastern Mediterranean, it does not appear to have successfully coped with the sea assaults of the Maltese knights or those of the Order of St. Stephen[35]. According to Ronald Jennings, the Sublime Porte continued to rely on galleys plied by oarsmen, while the Atlantic nations — England, The Low Countries, and even France — possessed swift sailing vessels capable of carrying heavy guns. In parallel, the Maltese knights adopted the use of galleys and Atlantic-type sailing vessels — a tactic that proved very effective against the Ottoman galleys[36].

The lagging of the Ottoman fleet was the product not only of political, social, and cultural processes but of the monetary crisis that struck Europe during this century. The flow of precious metals from the New World to its markets directly affected the Empire, which had no independent sources of precious metal[37]. Despite the ostensibly vast resources at its disposal and its organizational capacities, the Sublime Porte's situation in the Mediterranean at the beginning of the seventeenth century thus closely resembled that of the Hapsburgs and the Venetians.

[33] P. Masson, *Histoire du Commerce* cit., pp. 29-47; G.Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs* cit., pp. 13-15; D. Quataert, H. Inalcik (eds.), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 375.

[34] M. Ressel, C. Zwierlein, *The Ransoming of North European Captives* cit., p. 381; S. Boubaker, *Réseaux et techniques de rachat des captifs de la course a Tunis au XVII*[e] *siècle*, in W. Kaiser (ed.), *Le commerce des captifs: Les intermédiaires dans l'échange et le rachat des prisonniers en Méditerraneé, XVe-XVIIIe siècle*, École française de Rome, Rome, 2008, pp. 25-46; A. Brogini, Malte, *frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 358-397.

[35] R. Jennings, *Christians and Muslims* cit., pp. 353-359, 372.

[36] *Ibid*., pp. 349, 372. For the various types of ships used in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic during this period, see H. and R. Kahane, A. Tietze, *The Lingua Franca in the Levant, Turkish Nautical Terms of Italian and Greek Origin*, ABC Kitabevi, Istanbul-Ankara-Izmir, 1988, pp.238-243; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 250-266.

[37] S. Pamuk, *The Price Revolution in the Ottoman Empire Reconsidered*, «International Journal of Middle East Studies», 33.1 (2001), pp. 69-89.

II
THE KNIGHTS OF SAINT JOHN OF MALTA

This was the vacuum in which the Maltese Order flourished. Although historians who offered other explanations for the increase in the Order's activities were aware of these facts, each emphasized only some of them or others altogether[1]. The situation changed in the Western Mediterranean in the final decades of the seventeenth century, and in the Eastern Mediterranean during the eighteenth century[2]. Becoming more well established and acquiring control over all aspects of their sovereignty, the European nations sought to put a stop to piracy, Malta gradually freeing itself from its image as a pirate island as it increasingly took the form of a commercial centre[3]. With Napoleon's conquest of the island in 1798, the knightly Order finally ceased to exist as a brigands' organization[4].

Understanding the geopolitical background against which the ransoming of captives was undertaken is vital for determining the extent to

[1] F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean* cit., 2:1141-1142; M. Fontenay, *La Méditerranée* cit.; M. Greene, *Catholic Pirates* cit., pp. 80-81, and compare with A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 231-252.

[2] D. Panzac, *The Barbary Corsairs: The End of a Legend, 1800-1820*, Brill, Leiden, 2005; G. Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs* cit., pp. 72-91; A. Pelizza, *Alla fine del conflitto: Riscattati e redentori veneziani nel primo Settecento*, in H. Griezer, N. Priesching (eds.), *Gefangenenloskauf im Mittelmeerraum* cit., pp. 213-215.

[3] A.D. Atauz, *Eight Thousand Years* cit., pp. 156-159; T. Freller, *"Adversus Infideles"* cit., pp. 411, 429-430; F. Theuma, *In Search of Justice: The Depredation of Christian Greeks by Maltese Corsairs*, in B. Borstner, S.Gartner, S. Deschler-Erb, C. Dalli, I.M. D'Aprile (eds.), *Historicizing Religion. Critical Approaches to Contemporary Concerns*, PLUS-Pisa University Press, Pisa, 2010, pp. 134-144: http://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/31029172/In_Search_of_Justice.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId-AKIAJ56TQJRTWSMTNPEA&Expires-1384601924&Signature-SLLULwdMLMy-L4N2K2j9TjaQAk7c%3D&response-content-disposition-inline (accessed 16.11.2013).

[4] A. Knobler, *Holy Wars* cit., pp. 293-325.

which the states, pirates, ransomers, and other actors were motivated by religious considerations. Despite the attention scholars have traditionally paid to the Christian-Muslim conflict in the region during this period, the violent activities cannot be attributed solely or even primarily to religious ideals[5]. Those with explicitly declared religious principles were also motivated by political and — above all — financial factors. In essence, the struggle was for power and economic resources.

The Maltese knights had a clearly stated vocation:

> But the soldier for the glory of Jesus Christ, to preserve his religion and Catholic faith ... to be led by the spirit of the Maccabees, the holy warriors, the martyrs who fought with glory for their faith ... they shall not fear to hold the sword in their hand and put their intellect, fervor, and power into standing in the face of all danger to defend the glory of Jesus and the sacred cross[6].

Their aggressive piratical activity from the end of the sixteenth century onwards was not linked to this calling, however. Nor was it a function of the Ottoman Empire's decline or the Venetian patricians' divestment from Levantine trade. The principal explanation for it lies in the Order's history.

The knights originally resided in Rhodes, which they captured following their expulsion from Jerusalem (1187) and Acre (1291) and regarded as a haven from which they could continue to fight the Muslims and wrest the Holy Land back from the "infidels". It was, in fact, their determination to remain in the Near East that preserved the very rationale of their existence and established their economic independence in the midst of the European nations[7]. The Order's relations with the Muslim states during its Rhodian period (1337-1522) oscillated between peaceful trade and mutual piracy, eventually ending with the Ottoman Empire's conquest of the island in 1522, which once again deprived the Order of its base[8]. Only in 1530 did the Order accept Charles V's grant of Malta and Gozo as its fixed abode[9].

[5] Cf. A. Salzmann, *Migrants in Chains* cit., p. 396.
[6] R.A. de Vertot, *Histoire de l'Ordre des Chevaliers de Malte*, Louis Janet, Paris, 1819, 6:10-11, 14, 32, 37, 104 and passim.
[7] G. Scarabelli, *Il ruolo della marina giovannita* cit., p. 37.
[8] N. Vatin, *Rhodes et l'ordre de Saint-Jean-de-Jérusalem*, CNRS Editions, Paris, 2000, pp. 19-38, 101-107.
[9] D.A. Atauz, *Eight Thousand Years* cit., pp. 76-78, 82-88; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 58-77.

Unlike Rhodes, Malta was an isolated, bare island devoid of independent sources of livelihood[10]. The Order thus had to find sources of subsistence and income. At the same time, its distance from the Ottoman Empire allowed it to decrease its dependence on the latter as a trading partner[11]. The Order was dealt a further economic blow by the Reformation, losing much of its property — and thus significant sources of income — in states whose rulers adopted various forms of Protestantism[12]. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the Order's economic status declined even further, causing it to seek real sources of income beyond its shores. Piracy was one of the principal ways of achieving this.

Generally speaking, what is known as "piracy" took several forms. The Order of St. John of Malta had a maritime force of several vessels that patrolled the eastern sector of the Mediterranean, protecting vessels sailing under the flags of Catholic nations, boarding them to check their cargo and passengers to ensure that they carried no Jews or Muslims or their trade, and plundering ships bearing non-Catholic flags. The majority of the spoils of such activity belonged to the Order[13].

In addition to this activity — known in Italian as *corsa*, with those engaged in it referred to as *corsair* — there was also "authorized" piracy, whereby the commander of a vessel received special permission from his sovereign to raid the seas. Such men became known in English as "privateers" because they equipped and funded their vessels from their own pocket. The privateers were governed by internal regulations determined by the commander of their fleets — the Gran Maestro of the Maltese order[14], the Grand Duke of Tuscany in the case of the Order of St Stephen based in Livorno, and the Bey and divan of Tunis, Algiers, and Tripoli[15].

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43.
[11] S. Godwin, *Malta, A Mediterranean Bridge* cit., p. 39; A.D. Atauz, *Eight Thousand Years* cit., p. 83; A Di Vittorio, *I cavalieri* cit., p. 28; A. Blondy, *L'ordre de Saint-Jean* cit., pp. 78, 82-85.
[12] A.D. Atauz, *Eight Thousand Years* cit., pp. 79-82.
[13] J.M. Mathey, *Piraterie: Les leçons de l'histoire*, «Sécurité globale», 1 (2009), pp. 19-36; M. Greene, *Catholic Pirates* cit., pp. 95-96; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 256-259.
[14] For the *Gran Maestro*, see A. Blondy, *L'ordre de Saint-Jean* cit., pp. 76-77; R. Jennings, *Christians and Muslims* cit., p. 372; M. Greene, *Catholic Pirates* cit., pp. 95-96; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 256-259.
[15] D.J. Vitkus, N.I. Matar (eds.), *Piracy* cit:, pp. 8-9; M. Fontenay, *La Méditerranée* cit., pp. 321-322.

Parallel to this "official" privateering, many knights engaged in the profession independently and without a license. During the seventeenth century, a growing number of adventurers who did not belong to the Order received from the Gran Maestro letters patent that allowed them to engage in *corsa*, with Malta serving as their home port[16]. Other buccaneers also acted on their own initiative[17]. While the former could hide behind their authorization, the latter lay outside international law[18]. Despite the associative link between piracy and a world unbound by international law, the majority of pirates pretended to act within its scope. The Maltese knights, for example, based their claim to legitimacy on a pontifical deed blessing their activities, it being tacitly understood that this formed the legal basis upon which the Gran Maestro based his instructions to his commanders to engage in privateering and attack the shores of enemy states[19]. Within this category were certain port authorities that received orders to treat vessels seeking entrance as hostile[20].

The uniqueness of the Maltese Order lay in the fact that while a sovereign entity, it was not an independent state, the knights regarding themselves as defenders of Catholicism acting in the name of the Pope while being subjects of various Catholic states[21]. This circumstance both gave them a certain freedom of action and restricted them. While they could claim piracy to be a holy vocation — a battle against Islam — it also provided them with a direct source of income that alleviated their financial problems[22]. Conflicts between the economic and religious aspects frequently emerged from between the cracks. Whereas in the Rhodian period three hundreds knights had operated in the name of the Order, in Malta that number doubled, prompting their involvement in piracy to grow beyond that of their other "religious" activities[23]. Piracy became a very good business indeed[24].

[16] A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 324-329.
[17] M. Fontenay, *La Méditerranée* cit., pp. 333-334.
[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 224-228, 247-248.
[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 212-214, 224; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 120-123.
[20] M. Greene, *A Shared World* cit., p. 53; E. Ginio, *Piracy and Redemption* cit., p. 139.
[21] See F. Theuma, *In Search of Justice* cit.
[22] M. Fontenay, *La Méditerranée* cit., pp. 325, 331, 336, 389-390; Id., *Corsaires* cit., p. 361; A.D. Atauz, *Eight Thousand Years* cit., pp. 153-154.
[23] M. Greene, *Catholic Pirates* cit., pp. 95-98; A. Pelizza, *Riammessi a respirare l'aria tranquilla* cit. pp. 42-43, 146-147.
[24] A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 306-331.

The economic motive is also very striking in the Order's attitude towards the Venetian trading fleet and Orthodox Christian traders and seamen. While Venice was occasionally forced into hostilities with the Ottomans, they usually engaged in a give and take that was fruitful to both sides. In the eyes of the Maltese knights, the Republic was thus to all intents and purposes the ally of the enemy — and thus a legitimate object of piracy and privateering[25]. At the same time, however, Venice was a Catholic state; hence attacks on its vessels on the pretext that they were carrying enemy cargo could not be condoned by the Holy See. Assaults on vessels owned by Greek Orthodox merchants who were either Ottoman subjects or flew under the Venetian flag were also frowned up because, despite not being Catholic, they were still Christians. If the Holy See turned a blind eye to their distress, it relinquished the hope of bringing the Eastern Orthodox Church into the bosom of Catholicism. On the whole, the papal blessing was problematic from the perspective of the papacy as a state in the secular sense, its economic and political interests conflicting with interference in normal commerce and trade[26]. Although the Maltese knights believed themselves to be operating within the realm of international law, their activities frequently verged on the lawless[27]. One thing was clear: both Jews and Muslims were legitimate prey. If the Jews they took captive had been the Sultan's subjects, the issue would have been clear. Had they been Venetian subjects or, subjects of another Catholic sovereign, at least the matter could have been debated from the perspective of the Serene Republic[28].

[25] M. Greene, *A Shared World* cit., p. 70; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 312-317.
[26] Cf. T. Freller, *"Adversus Infideles"* cit., p. 410; M. Greene, *Catholic Pirates* cit., pp. 217-219.
[27] A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 318-323.
[28] M. Greene, *Catholic Pirates* cit., pp. 57-58; M. Rozen, *Strangers in a Strange Land: The Extraterritorial Status of Jews in Italy and the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries*, in A. Rodrigue (ed.), *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry: Community and Leadership*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington IN, 1992, pp. 123-166; B. Arbel, *Trading Nations: Jews and Venetians in the Early Modern Eastern Mediterranean*, Brill, Leiden, 1995, pp. 22, 27, 60 note 21.

III
CONSIDERING NEW SOURCES

Apart from the new evaluation of the scholarly literature concerning Mediterranean piracy in general, one of the anchors of this study are nine missives included in MS Jerusalem Envoy Letters 8°61, now housed in the National Library of Israel[1]. This collection includes 232 letters copied from the archives of the Jerusalem community by a scribe of the community in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Although he sought to delete all the identifying marks in order to create a template for the writing of other letters, to our great fortune he was not overly meticulous, frequently leaving details that allow us to identify the circumstances of their composition and the persons involved.

Most of the letters date from between 1625 and 1670, and were written either in Jerusalem to various communities throughout the Mediterranean and beyond, or from these communities to Jerusalem[2]. Those that deal with the ransoming of captives cover this geographic expanse and may also be presumed to be from the same period. Amongst the communities that can be identified in the entire collection are Istanbul, Salonika, and various communities in the Italian states, Persia, North Africa, and Egypt; all except the Italian states and Persia lay within the bounds of the Ottoman Empire. While four out of the nine missives have been published in various

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[1] See Appendix.

[2] For the manuscript and scribe's work, see M. Rozen, *Ha-qehilah ha-yehudit bi-yerushalayim ba-me'ah ha-shev'a 'esreh* [The Jewish Community of Jerusalem in the Seventeenth Century], Tel Aviv University Press/Ministry of Defense, Tel Aviv, 1984, pp. 176-177, 299-315.

places, to date no attempt has been made to elucidate the reason for their inclusion in the collection. The study of the nine missives as a whole not only broadens our understanding of the financial aspects linked to the ransoming of captives but also gives us a different overall picture and context of the redemption enterprise than the familiar one. Comparison of the way in which Jewish captives were redeemed and the methods adopted by other nations sheds a very different light on the commonly accepted view of the practice as essentially philanthropic. Other documents from the same period published by various scholars — such as Simha Assaf, Cecil Roth, Eliezer Bashan, Meir Benayahu, and Daniel Carpi — help illuminate and interpret the scene painted by these nine missives[3].

All nine letters relate to Jews captured while sailing in the eastern Mediterranean — i.e., from the shores of the Adriatic eastwards and southwards. Four deal with people captured by the knights of St. John of Malta on their way to Eretz Israel[4]. In one case, we know their port of embarkation — Salonika[5]. One of the captives and a family of at least four fell into the hands of pirates

[3] S. Assaf, *Le-toledot ha-yehudim ba-i maltah* [More on the History of the Jews in the Island of Malta], in Id., *Be-oholei ya'aqov* [In the Tents of Jacob], Mossad Harav Kook, Jerusalem, 1943, pp. 107-115; C. Roth, *The Jews of Malta* cit.; Id., *Le-toledot ha-shevuyim ha-yehudim be-malta* [The History of Jewish Captives in Malta], «Zion» (Supp.) 3 (1929), pp. 164-171; E. Bashan, *Shivyah u-fdut ba-hevrah ha-yehudit be-artzot ha-yam ha-tikhon (1391-1830)* [Captivity and Ransom in Mediterranean Jewish Society (1391-1830)], Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 1980; M. Benayahu, *Pidyon shevuyim* [Redemption of Captives], in *Ha-yehasim she-bein yehudei yavan li-yhudey italiah mi-gerush sefarad 'ad tom ha-republiqah ha-venetzianit* [The Relation Between Greek and Italian Jewry from the Expulsion from Spain till the End of the Venetian Republic], Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 1980, pp. 27-56, 243-227; Id., *Igrot le-ḥakhmei eretz-yisrael she-nishbu be-malta u-ve-messina* [Letters to the Rabbis of Eretz Israel Captured in Malta and Messina], in Id., *Dor ehad ba-aretz: Igrot rabbi shemuel abuhav ve-rabbi mosheh zakut be-'inyenei eretz-yisrael 1639-1666* [One Generation in the Land: Letters of Rabbi Shmuel Abuhav and Rabbi Mosheh Zacuto Regarding Eretz-Israel, 1639-1666], Yad Harav Nissim, Jerusalem, 1988, pp. 361-381; D. Carpi, *'Al irgun ha-pe'ulah le-ma'an pidyon shevuyim bein yehudei venetziah* [The Beginnings of the Activity for the Redemption of Captives among Venetian Jews during the Seventeenth Century], «Zion», 46 (1981), pp. 155-158; Id., *Pe'ilut ha-memunim 'al qupat pidyon shevuyim she-be-venetziah ba-shanim 1654-1670* [Le attività dei preposti al riscatto dei prigionieri della Comunità ebraica spagnola di Venezia, 1654-1670/The Activities of the Officials of the Captives Redemption Treasury in Venice, 1654-1670], «Zion», 68 (2003), pp. 175-222.

[4] See the Appendix for documents I (n. 54 in the Jerusalem Ms.), V (n. 196 in the Jerusalem Ms.), VI (n. 197 in the Jerusalem Ms.), and VIII (n. 205. in the Jerusalem Ms.).

[5] Appendix, document VI (n. 197 Jerusalem Ms.).

twice[6]. An older couple were also captured by the Maltese knights and held on the island[7]. A group of thirty-four men and women were captured by the Maltese knights on one vessel[8]. One person was captured at his place of residence, released, roamed, and tried to find his way home[9]. Another "fell captive to the cruel and unforgiving ruler of a distant land … the city of Messina may it be eradicated from the face of the earth"[10]. While he was held captive in Messina, no indication is given of whether he was captured at sea or by whom. Up until 1674, Messina was under Spanish rule, the rulers of Sicily being the feudal masters of Malta as well[11]. Assuming the letter's chronological framework to be accurate, this man appears to have been captured by the Maltese knights on land or at sea and taken into slavery in Sicily[12]. One of the letters gives no indication of the place where the captive was captured or the circumstances[13]. Of the total number of captives spoken of in the letters — forty-six in all — forty-two were thus captured by Maltese knights while at sea, one was apparently seized at an unknown location and taken to Messina, and three were captured in uncertain circumstances in their place of residence.

Despite attempting to pluck at the heartstrings of their readers in order to raise the necessary funds for ransom, the descriptions given in the letters are largely credible, as demonstrated by other sources. Some of these descriptions echo Genizah letters from the eleventh century calling for the redemption of Jewish captives brought to Alexandria for sale by their Byzantine captors[14]. The authors of the Jerusalem letters could not have seen the earlier letters, and the similarity attests only to the centuries-old practices connected with human trafficking. The conditions of captivity they depict include being stripped of most, and at times, all clothing[15], long hours of hard labour such as rowing, carrying heavy burdens,

[6] Appendix, documents I (n. 54, Jerusalem Ms.), VI (n. 197, in the Jerusalem Ms.).

[7] Appendix, document IX (n. 207 Jerusalem Ms.).

[8] Appendix, document VII (n. 202 Jerusalem Ms.).

[9] Appendix, document II (n. 148 Jerusalem Ms.).

[10] Appendix, document III (n. 155 Jerusalem Ms.).

[11] A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp.45-47.

[12] Compare *ibid.*, p. 360.

[13] Appendix, document IV (n. 164 Jerusalem Ms.).

[14] M. Frenkel, '*Proclaim Liberty to Captives and Freedom to Prisoners*', in H. Grieser, N. Friesching (eds.), *Gefangenenloskauf im Mittelmeerraum* cit., pp. 85-86, 88, 90.

[15] Appendix, documents VII (n. 202 Jerusalem Ms.), VIII (n. 205 Jerusalem Ms.), and IX (n. 207 Jerusalem Ms.).

or working in “bricks and mortar”[16]; and being chained to the wall or floor by neck or foot fetter[17] with very little to eat or drink[18]. The account of an English traveller who visited Malta around 1669 confirms this sorry plight:

> *Jews*, *Moors*, and *Turks* are made slaves here, and are publicly sold in the market. A stout fellow may be bought (if he be an inferior person) for 120 or 160 scudi of Malta. The *Jews* are distinguish’d from the rest by a little piece of yellow cloth on their hats or caps. We saw a rich *Jew* who was taken about a year before who was sold in the market that morning we visited the prison for 400 scudi; and supposing himself free, by reason of a passport he had from *Venice*, he struck the merchant that bought him; whereupon he was presently sent hither, his beard and hair shaven off, a great chain clapped on his legs, and bastinato’d with 50 blows[19].

Captives for whom no ransom was forthcoming and who could no longer work were put on the slave market in places with Jewish settlements in the hope that their brethren would ransom them[20]. This was the fate, for example, of a man taken captive in his home town. Having worked for his captors for thirteen years, and left unransomed due to the high price placed on him, he was eventually taken from city to city until one Jewish community raised sufficient money to ransom him. The scribe who wrote a letter of recommendation on his behalf beseeching other communities in the places he had passed through to assist him with money and sustenance in order to enable him to reach his destination was the official scribe of the Jerusalem community[21]. A captive seized in his home town and sent to Messina was held there for three years in a dungeon — “a

[16] Appendix, documents II (n. 148 Jerusalem Ms.), VI (n. 196 Jerusalem Ms.), VII (n. 202. 202 Jerusalem Ms.), VIII (n.205 Jerusalem Ms.), and IX (n. 207 Jerusalem Ms.).

[17] Appendix, documents I (n. 54 Jerusalem Ms.), II (n. 148 Jerusalem Ms.), III (Jerusalem MS. n. 155), VI (n. 196 Jerusalem Ms.), VII (n. 202 Jerusalem Ms.), and IX (n. 207 Jerusalem Ms.).

[18] Appendix, documents VI (n. 196 Jerusalem Ms.), VII (202 Jerusalem Ms.), and VIII (n.205 Jerusalem Ms.).

[19] Philip Skippon, *An account of a journey made thro’ part of the Low-Countries, Italy and France*, in J. Churchill (ed.), *A collection of voyages and travels, some now printed from original manuscripts, others now first published in English* …, London, 1746, 6:621: http://tinyurl.com/zwcjrpx (accessed 21.5.2014). In the seventeenth century, the Maltese scudo was slightly less than a Spanish real: see A. Hoppen, *The Finances of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, «European Studies Review», 3 (1973), pp. 103-119.

[20] M. Frenkel, *‘Proclaim Liberty’* cit., pp. 85-86, 93-94.

[21] Appendix, document II (n. 148 Jerusalem Ms.).

place where the king’s prisoners are kept” — because his captors demanded an enormous sum for him[22]. Another was forced to man the oars of one galley after another until, unable to row any longer, he was severely beaten, starved, and abused until he became blind, at which point his captors began mocking, cursing, and throwing rocks at him[23]. Yet another, on his way to Eretz Israel, was captured by the Maltese knights, who stripped him of all his clothes and sold him on to “hard masters” in Malta who enslaved him in “hard labour in bricks and mortar and carrying great and precious stones on his back” — possibly an allusion to a marble mine. Like the rest, he laboured from dawn to dusk, being beaten until bleeding when his strength failed, his flesh melting off his back[24]. A relative exception in the collection of letters is one that discusses the case of the capture of thirty-four souls — men and women — on one vessel for whom the Maltese knights demanded fifteen thousand *kuru□*[25]. Until they were ransomed they were all forced into hard labour[26].

The rabbinical authorities in the various Mediterranean communities held diverse views regarding the issue of captivity, being divided over whether raising money to ransom captives was a frequent occurrence that demanded a permanent purse or whether money should only be raised when the need arose. Everything was dependent, of course, upon the place and time. While R. Joseph Colon (ca. 1420-1480), the head of the *yeshivah* (house of study) in Mantua in the second half of the fifteenth century, maintained that ransoming of captives was not a commonplace affair, R. David Hacohen of Corfu (ca. 1465-1527) argued that in all the places in which he had served — Patras and Lepanto on either side of the Gulf of Corinth — being taken captive was a regular occurrence[27]. R. Benyamin Ze’ev ben Matatyah, who lived in Venice, Arta, and other places in modern-day Greece in the first half of the sixteenth century, contended that any sum left over from monies collected in the community for the ransom of captives must be kept for the next

[22] Appendix, document III (n. 155 Jerusalem Ms.).

[23] Appendix, document IV (n. 196 Jerusalem Ms.).

[24] Appendix, document VIII (n. 205 Jerusalem Ms.).

[25] S. Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 166. The *kuru□* was an Ottoman coin comparable to the Dutch *reichstahler*, known in Turkish as *kuru□ esedi or aslan kuru□* due to the lion stamped on it.

[26] Appendix, document VII (n. 202 Jerusalem Ms.).

[27] Cf. David Hacohen of Corfu, *Responsa Radakh*, Jerusalem, 1968, 28.

case and not given to any other charitable cause[28]. In his opinion, funds for supporting the poor were also to be used for ransoming captives if the need arose[29]. It is immediately clear that rabbinical rulings made in port cities attached much greater weight to the raising of ransom funds, captivity being a common event.

The importance attached to ransom funds in port cities as opposed to inland communities is confirmed by an analysis of the sources from which these funds were derived. While most of the important Jewish communities in the Mediterranean in the early modern age were faced with the need to raise money for ransoming captives, only very few maintained a permanent fund dedicated to this purpose. Others had funds whose coffers were filled and depleted as needed. The most common phenomenon was that of communities that engaged in redeeming captives, even on a large scale, without a fund designated for this purpose. Thus, for example, while the slave markets of Istanbul frequently saw Jewish captives over the course of many centuries, the Istanbul community is nowhere stated to have possessed a dedicated fund for ransoming captives, or regular officers appointed to deal with the issue, the money required generally being raised for each specific case[30]. Many of the captives were brought to Istanbuli slave markets from Russia and the Crimea.

The community nonetheless made huge efforts to ransom each and every one, and a ruling was issued at the beginning of the seventeenth century obligating Jewish traders from other cities in the Empire in which Istanbuli traders were taxed to pay similar taxes in Istanbul, these monies being devoted to ransoming Jewish captives from Eastern Europe[31]. Since the premise was that anyone engaged in trading was likely to find himself in places where he could be taken captive, the tax served as a form of insurance. This suggests the existence of a permanent fund rather than an independent repository, and may have formed part of the fund for the support of Eretz Israel — whose communities were always regarded as being at risk of captivity.

[28] R. Benjamin Ze'ev ben Matatyah, *Responsa Benyamin Ze'ev*, Jerusalem, 1959, 230-231.

[29] *Ibid.*, 264.

[30] E. Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom* cit., pp. 189-190.

[31] R. Yosef ben Mosheh mi-Trani, *Responsa Maharit*, Zalman Leib Falkier and Co., Lviv, 1861, vol. 2, 13.

During the 1648/49 Chmielnicki uprising, Ukrainian Cossacks sold thousands of captives — primarily women and children — to the Tartars of the Crimean Peninsula, from where they were transported to the slave markets in Istanbul[32]. Although the Jewish community raised vast funds by various means for their redemption, this was on a case-by-case basis, each time a group arrived. Women sold their jewelry and the community borrowed money from the Karaites in the city, using the services of the Venetian community to operate "donor drives" in Frankfurt-am-Main, Hamburg, and Poznań[33].

A tax similar to that placed on foreign traders in Venice was also imposed on such traders in Alexandria for the purpose of ransoming captives. Here, too, however, the sources fail to confirm the existence of a permanent fund[34]. More commonly, contributions were raised at special personal events or bequeathed in wills, both as defined sums and through the creation of religious trust funds[35]. The communities also organized special "fund-raising campaigns" for unusual emergency cases in which a large number of people were taken captive simultaneously or one after the other[36]. In taking the approach that the redemption of captives did not warrant the establishment of a permanent fund, the Alexandrian community followed hundreds of years of tradition. It had always engaged in this effort, but never deemed it necessary to institutionalize it[37].

[32] On the Crimea slave trade in the early modern period see M. Kizilov, *Slave Trade in the Early Modern Crimea from the Perspective of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, «Journal of Early Modern History», 11.1 (2007), pp. 1-31; D. Kołodziejczyk, *Slave hunting and slave redemption as a business enterprise: The northern Black Sea region in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries*, «Oriente moderno», 86.1 (2006), pp. 149-159. It is noteworthy that none of the above has mentioned the massive sale of Jewish captives during the Ukrainian revolt of 1648/49 at the Crimea to Istanbuli slave traders. The number of these is estimated by Jewish sources between 3,000 to 20,000 (S. Stampfer, *What actually happened to the Jews of Ukraine in 1648?*, «Jewish History», 17.2 (2003), p. 218.

[33] E. Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom* cit., pp. 193-197.

[34] R. Avraham ben Mordekhai HaLevi, *Responsa Ginat Veradim*, Istanbul, 1716, Yoreh De'ah, law 3, sec. 10.

[35] For Corfu see R. David Hacohen of Corfu, *Responsa Radakh* cit., 2; for Chios, see R. Shelomoh ben Avraham Hacohen, *Responsa Rashakh*, ed. H.Y. Porush, Zikhron Aharon, Jerusalem, 2011, vol. 4, §94; R. Aharon Sasson, *Responsa Torat Emet*, Ioanni Caleoni,Venice, 1626, 83; for Venice see E. Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom* cit., pp. 237-239; for Firenze and Hamburg, see *ibid.*, p. 247; for Amsterdam, see *ibid.*, p. 264 - all from the seventeenth century. For religious trusts, see E. Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom* cit., pp. 209, 222, 229, 235, 255-256, 260-261.

[36] E. Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom* cit., pp. 116, 200-201, 207, 238, 264.

[37] M. Frenkel, *'Proclaim Liberty'* cit., pp. 89, 91.

The communities that maintained permanent funds for the ransoming of captives were generally those in states that, being in constant conflict with other maritime powers, were perpetually at risk of falling victim to the violence. Almost exclusively, these were ports or island communities belonging either to the Ottoman Empire or the Italian states. Ideally, the funds came from regular taxes paid by the community members, as in Salonika and Rhodes. Later on such taxes were imposed in Venice, which became the most important centre of Jewish ransom activity in the Mediterranean, followed by Livorno[38].

[38] E. Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom* cit., pp. 202, 208. For Venice, see C. Roth, *The Jews of Malta* cit.; Id., *The History of Jewish Captives in Malta* cit. For Livorno, see below, Chapter Six.

IV

THE VENICE COMMUNITY AND ITS RANSOMING ENTERPRISE

The thread that links the Jerusalem epistles to the world of piracy is Venice, whose ransoming activities — in relation to the Malta captives in particular — illuminate the financial chain whose results we view in the missives. Its heavy investment in the business of ransoming captives was undoubtedly a function of the role the city played in international trade across the Mediterranean. Although it had already begun to lose its status as the most important emporium of the Mediterranean at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Venice remained the key link in the chain between captives sold in the Maltese and Sicilian markets and the Jewish communities in the Christian and Muslim worlds because its vessels were regarded as a legitimate target in the eyes of the Maltese knights throughout the sixteen and seventeenth centuries — and even into the eighteenth century.

The ransom activities of the Venetian Jewish community followed the pattern of the Venetian Republic itself after the fall of Cyprus (1570). It has been estimated that some 10,000 Christians, mostly civilians, were taken captive, and a huge effort was needed to redeem them[1]. Even before the defeat of Cyprus, it was the Senate that organized the collection of money for the ransoming of captives[2]. However, as the needs increased, the Senate concluded that provisional means were not enough, and decided that the three Superintendents of the Hospitals and the Pious Places (Provedditori sopra ospedali e luogi pii) would organize and coordinate the activi-

[1] A. Pelizza, *Riammessi a respirare l'aria tranquilla* cit., p. 58.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

ties needed to ransom the captives whom the Serenissima regarded as worthy of its assistance (1586). They cooperated with the Patriarch of the city, and the Republic itself contributed part of the sum needed for the ransom of each captive. Those deserving of the Republic's help were of course its own citizens, the citizens of its territories outside Venice, and people who had rendered a special service to the Republic[3]. Jews were not considered citizens of Venice, and thus were not among those deemed worthy of this effort. However, the example presented by the Republic undoubtedly influenced the Jewish community's attitude towards the problem of the captives.

The Venetian community maintained several funds for ransoming captives, serving its various congregations. The most important of these belonged to the newest settlers in the city, the Levantini ("Easterners") — Jewish traders from the Ottoman Empire who lived and traded in Venice — and the Sephardim (Talmud Torah congregation) or Ponentini Jews — "Westerners" — "New Christians" who had returned to Judaism in Venice[4].

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 56-68.

[4] For both communities, see B. Ravid, *The Legal Status of the Jewish Merchants of Venice, 1541-1638*, «Journal of Economic History», 30 (1975), pp. 274-279 (German translation in «Emuna» 10 [1975], pp. 12-17); Id., *The Establishment of the Ghetto Vecchio of Venice, 1541: Background and Reappraisal*, in *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, World Union for Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 1975, vol. 2, pp. 153-167; Id., *The First Charter of the Jewish Merchants of Venice, 1589*, «Association for Jewish Studies Review», 1 (1976), pp. 187-222; Id., *The Legal Status of the Jews of Venice to 1509*, «Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research», 54 (1987), pp. 169-202; Id., *The Establishment of the Ghetto Nuovissimo of Venice*, in H. Beinart (ed.), *Jews in Italy: Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Umberto Cassuto on the 100th Anniversary of His Birth*, Magnes, Jerusalem, 1988, pp. 35-54; Id., *The Religious, Economic and Social Background and Context of the Establishment of the Ghetti of Venice*, in G. Cozzi (ed.), *Gli Ebrei e Venezia*, Edizioni Comunità, Milan, 1987, pp. 211-259; Id., *Ghetti, Moneylenders and Merchants*, in J-M. Cohen (ed.), *The Ghetto in Venice: Ponentini, Levantini e Tedeschi 1516-1797*, SDU Uitgeverij, s'Gravenhagen, 1990, pp. 10-27; Id., *Daniel Rodriga and the First Decade of the Jewish Merchants of Venice*, in A. Mirsky, A. Grossman, Y. Kaplan (eds.), *Exile and Diaspora: Studies in the History of the Jewish People Presented to Prof. Chaim Beinart*, Yad Ben Zvi/Hebrew University Press, Jerusalem, 1991, pp. 203-223; Id., *An Introduction to the Charters of the Jewish Merchants of Venice*, in E. Horowitz, M. Orfali (eds.), *The Mediterranean and the Jews*, vol. 2, *Society, Culture and Economy in Early Modern Times*, Ramat Gan, Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002, pp. 203-246; Id., *On Sufferance and not as of Right: The Status of the Jewish Communities in Early-Modern Venice*, in D. Malkiel (ed.), *The Lion Shall Roar: Leon Modena and his World*, Magnes Press/Yad Ben Zvi, Jerusalem, 2003, pp. 17-61; B.D. Cooperman, *Venetian Policy towards Levantine Jews in its Broader Italian Context*, in G. Cozzi (ed.), *Gli Ebrei e Venezia*, Edizioni Comunità,

We have a relatively substantial amount of information about the activities of these two groups. The minute book of copied letters written by «those appointed for the ransoming of captives on behalf of the "holy Talmud Torah congregation" between 1654 and 1670 has been preserved in the archive of the Venetian community and forms the basis of Daniel Carpi's seminal work on the topic[5]. The primary source for the years between 1671 and 1711 — a thick minute book of 532 copies of letters they composed, which served Cecil Roth in his research — has unfortunately been lost, however[6]. The Levantini congregation, whose founding preceded that of the Ponentini, appears to have begun ransoming captives as early as the end of the sixteenth century[7]. As the Ponentini became well established in the city, the two congregations merged their efforts. A decision taken by the community council of Padova on 15 July 1640 (25 Tammuz 5400) indicates that the two groups were already cooperating in Venice, the joint fund containing all the money raised for this purpose by several Italian communities. This statement declares that those appointed to ransom captives from the two congregations jointly "took it upon themselves to ransom any captives there might be from time to time, apart from those from the Black Sea onwards, annulling any other activity taken in this regard"[8]. In other words, while the Venice congregations restricted themselves to ransoming captives taken in the Mediterranean and its environs alone — those falling captive from the Black Sea northwards and eastwards apparently being the responsibility

Milan, 1987, pp. 65-84; M. Rozen, *Collective Memories and Group Boundaries: The Judeo-Spanish Diaspora between the Lands of Christendom and the World of Islam*, «Michael», 14 (1997), pp. 35-52; Ead., *Strangers* cit., pp. 123-166.

[5] D. Carpi, *The Activities of the Officials* cit.

[6] C. Roth, *The Jews of Malta* cit., p. 219 n. 24. See also Carpi, *The Activities of the Officials* cit., pp. 176-177.

[7] D. Carpi, *Pe'ulat Q"Q italiani she-be-venetziah le-ma'an 'aniyei eretz Israel ba-shanim 5306-5493* [The Activity of the «Italian Synagogue» of Venice on Behalf of the Jewish Communities of Eretz-Israel Between 1576 and 1733], Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 1978, p. 22; Id., *The Activities of the Officials* cit., p. 7; Id., *Beginnings* cit., p. 156; M. Benayahu, *Redemption of Captives*, in Id., *The Relation Between Greek and Italian Jewry* cit., p. 29; idem, R. Yosef Pardo, ibid., p. 179. Although C. Roth (*The Jews of Malta* cit., p. 128) posits that the Levantini were prompted to engage in the ransoming of captives in the Mediterranean because of their trading activity therein, he maintains that the setting up of the fund was not linked to this but was rather the consequence of a pressing need to ransom captives in the wake of the 1648/49 Chmielnicki uprising.

[8] D. Carpi, *Beginnings* cit., p. 158.

of the Istanbul community — they precluded all private enterprises from raising funds for the ransoming of captives, demanding that all the monies raised within the European Jewish communities for this purpose be concentrated in Venice[9]. When the Livornese community established itself, it took upon itself the responsibility of caring for all the Jews captured west of the city and in the «Barbary» — i.e., North Africa[10].

Apart from the special donations given by philanthropists, the Venetian fund received an annual fixed tax from taxpaying members of the community; a ¾ percent tax on all goods sent by sea to Jewish traders; and a ⅛% tax from all goods received. The monies collected were kept in the congregational coffers and administered by five *deputados de cautivos*, three from the Sephardi Ponentini congregation. Rather than establishing a voluntary organization, the two congregations undertook this activity, and the decisions of the officials appointed for this purpose were binding on all members[11]. Roth correctly surmised that the ransom enterprise served as a type of insurance company — the fact that the congregations' members were all of Iberian descent and their primary source of income was trade with the Levant put them at higher risk than any other Jews in Venice or the Levant[12].

During the period when the Jerusalem epistles were written, those in charge of the ransom fund in Venice employed local non-Jewish traders in Malta as mediators. The latter were part of an entire class of traders from different nations living in Malta and earning their income from the ransom enterprise and other piracy-related business[13]. The first mediator engaged by the Venetian officials was Baccio Bandinelli, who was active between 1648 and 1668, when he retired[14]. He was replaced by a French trader by the name of François Garsin, a judge of the tribunal of the Con-

[9] C. Roth, *The Jews of Malta* cit., p. 220. For the geographic scope of the society's activity, see *ibid.*, p. 223.
[10] Letters from 19 September 1667 to the officials of the *Levantini* and *Ponentini* ransom societies in Venice to Isaac Arrojo and a letter from the latter on 8 January, 1668 to Nathan Franco in Tunis: see D. Carpi, *Beginnings* cit., pp. 183-184.
[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 178-181.
[12] C. Roth, *The Jews of Malta* cit., p. 221.
[13] A. Brogini, *Intermédiaires de rachat laïcs et religieux à Malte aux XVIe et XVIIe siècle*, in W. Kaiser (ed.), *Le commerce des captifs: Les intermédiaires dans l'échange et le rachat des prisonniers en Méditerraneé, XVe-XVIIIe siècle*, École française de Rome, Rome, 2008, pp. 49-63.
[14] D. Carpi, *The Activities of the Officials* cit., pp. 187-188.

solato del Mare (maritime law), established in 1697 by the Gran Maestro as a secular judicial framework designed to reduce the power of Greek Orthodox traders to appeal the decisions taken by the papal nuncio's court — up until that juncture the only arbitrator with respect to maritime law on the island[15]. Since appeals against the papal nuncio were made in Rome before the Pope himself, the Maltese knights quickly realized that the Pope did not look upon their own interests favourably in cases involving Greek traders who were citizens of the Ottoman Empire or Venice who made claims for the return of their goods or vessels. Garsin was thus a prominent personage on the island. A trader by the name of Thomas Louis da Souza who assisted Bandinelli continued to aid Garsin between 1673 and 1674, when Garsin asked the Venetian officials for ransoming captives to relieve him of da Souza's help[16]. Garsin himself served until his death in 1706, being succeeded by his son, Jean-Baptiste, who served another ten years[17].

The Jewish sources depict Bandinelli and Garsin as righteous men working without seeking reward. Upon Bandinelli's retirement, the Venetian ransom society wrote him a letter stating that they were gratified to have an occasion to express the immense debt they would always owe him for his great devotion and the kindness he had displayed for such a length of time towards the miserable slaves: "All the greater will be your merit before God and by Him will you be rewarded all the more, these being of a nation diverse from your own"[18]. In a letter to Thomas Luis da Souza, they similarly noted that Bandinelli had worked with pure devotion and compassion, and performed this *obra de misericordia* (act of mercy) without any vested interest, as though he were the father of these miserable souls[19].

François Garsin's good will and devotion to the captives was also praised. In 1671, the members of the General Yeshiva wrote concerning him to the rabbinical authorities in Cairo and Alexandria that the officials of the ransom society of the Levantini and the Ponentini congregations had:

[15] M. Greene, *Catholic Pirates* cit., pp. 208-223.
[16] C. Roth, *The Jews of Malta* cit., p. 224.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 225.
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Ibid.*, 225. For O. Bandinelli and F. Garsin, see also D. Carpi, *The Activities of the Officials* cit., pp. 187-188. For Garsin, see *ibid.*, p. 188 n. 53.

taken for themselves, upon careful deliberation, a gentile merchant from that land [Malta] to be their emissary there, to act upon their instructions with the captives and their masters; and this he does at all times without thought of personal gain, working tirelessly for the benefit of the captives. And his name is Francisco Grasin [sic][20].

While the good character of the two men and their service on behalf of Jewish captives in Malta cannot be doubted, it is important to remember that all the agents who dealt with the ransoming of captives — whether Christians acting on behalf of the Venetian society, or Jews in Tunis who mediated the ransom of captives from Christian countries — were businessmen, ransoming being a business just like any other[21]. This had been the case throughout the Mediterranean since mediaeval times, across states and religions[22]. The agent would go to the jail, identify the captives on whose behalf he had been summoned, and draw from them details concerning their country of origin, citizenship, and financial means. He would also give each a small amount for expenses — a *ducat* a week during their first month of captivity — in the name of the Venetian officers[23]. Having reported to the society about what he had done, he would then wait for their answer regarding the money that could be raised on behalf of each captive.

Although the society did not automatically pay out the required sum, the agents had a certain leeway, necessary due to the distance between Venice and Malta. At public auctions, the agent could pay up to 60-70 ducats (120-140 *kuru□ esedi*) without authorization from the society[24]. In practical terms, this meant extending a line of credit to the officials, credit naturally coming at a price. The fact that the agent enjoyed a "standing license" of this type suggests a relationship of complete trust[25]. For higher sums,

[20] C. Roth, *The History of Jewish Captives in Malta* cit., pp. 166-167.

[21] M. Rozen, *Les Marchands Juifs* cit., pp. 90-92, 96; S. Boubaker, *Réseaux* cit., pp. 32-45; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 389-392.

[22] D.B. Hershenzon, *Early Modern Spain and the Creation of the Mediterranean: Captivity, Commerce, and Knowledge*, PhD., The University of Michigan, 2011, pp. 150, and note 381,159, 170-172, 210; M. Kizilov, *Slave Trade* cit., 27; M. Orfali, *Ragusa and Ragusan Jews in the Effort to Ransom Captives* cit., 22-27; N. Priesching, *Seelenheil und Prestige. Die Erzbruderschaft der Gonfalone als Loskauf-organisation für den Kirchenstaat* in H. Greiser, N. Priesching (eds.), *Gefangenenloskauf im Mittelmeerraum* cit., p. 203; A. Pelizza, *Riammessi a respirare l'aria tranquilla* cit., pp. 133-135.

[23] C. Roth, *The Jews of Malta* cit., p. 227.

[24] Cf. A. Pelizza, *Riammessi a respirare l'aria tranquilla* cit., p. 139.

[25] D. Carpi, *Beginnings* cit., p. 187 n. 51.

the society instructed the agent to negotiate with the captors while it sought to find out whether it could collect the necessary amount from family members and/or sympathetic donors and philanthropists[26]. When the society officials had satisfied themselves with regard to the price to be paid and the sources where it could be raised, the agent was then authorized to pay the sum to the captors. It is noteworthy that the sum of 60-70 ducats is rather low in comparison with the average price of a slave in the Maltese market: 100 ducats. Moreover, the recent study of this market by Anne Brogini shows that the price of Jewish captives was higher than that of others, most likely because of the organized and intensive redemption activity conducted on their behalf. The average price of a Jewish captive on the Malta slave market was 190 ducats[27], though it sometimes mounted to much higher sums[28].

The actual way in which the money was transferred overseas, across borders and hostile sovereignties, is rarely mentioned in the scholarly literature[29]. None of the Venetian official documents goes into any real detail regarding the method whereby the money was transferred from Venice to Malta, a question that naturally arises given the risk involved. Even if the functionaries in Venice wrote on several occasions that the agents acted solely out of kindness, it does not mean that they were not remunerated for their work. When an agent paid captors for any prisoner they were holding, he was in effect giving credit to the functionaries in Venice[30] and receiving the money from these officials via a bill of exchange (*lettera di cambio*), as explained below. A certain percentage was added on, essentially constituting interest plus a service fee. Just as Bandinelli and Garsin

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 231. See also a letter to R. Shemuel Garmizan from 1650 in Benayahu, *Letters to the Rabbis of Eretz Yisrael* cit., p. 377, in which the author refers to a similar sum of a hundred *reales* (equal in value to a *kuru□*), ordinary ransom sums, and two hundred *reales* if outside sources of funding were found.

[27] A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., p. 359.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 363. A. Brogini cites the prices in écu (scudo), which I converted to ducats.

[29] While Carpi (*The Activities of the Officials* cit., p. 189 n. 56) appears to have been aware of the ways in which the ransom was paid, he seems to have chosen not to discuss them in detail. For rare references to such money transfers relating to ransom of captives see J. Martin, D. Romano (eds.), *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297–1797*, JHU Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 2002, pp. 458-459; C.B. Johnson, *Cervantes and the Material World*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 2000, pp. 79-80; D.B. Hershenzon, *Early Modern Spain* cit., pp. 180-181, 185-186.

[30] Cf. A. Pelizza, *Riammessi a respirare l'aria tranquilla* cit., pp. 133-134.

were the agents (*fattore*) of the Venetian officials in Malta, the latter were the agents of Bandinelli and Garsin in Venice. The relationship thus worked both ways. A bill of exchange was sent to the agent in Malta stating:

Pay to A [owner of the prisoner] on the basis of this letter the sum of X *ducats* (which is equivalent to Y Spanish *reales* or Z Maltese *scudi*) that was received from C for the release of B, at the rate of 2 *reales* to 1 *ducat* [for example]. Charge this to our account[31].

Charging the payment to the account of the officials in Venice meant that the agent in Malta was in effect providing them with credit. He could thus instruct them at any time, on the basis of the bill of exchange, to purchase goods in this amount for him in Venice or pay monies owed by him to a third party in Sienna (apparently Bandinelli's birthplace), Venice, or any other location[32].

Another option was a letter stating:

Pay to A [owner of the prisoner] on the basis of this letter the sum of X ducats (which is equivalent to Y Spanish *reales* or Z Maltese *scudi that was received from C*) for the release of B, at the rate of 2 *reales* to 1 *ducat* [for example]. Charge this to our account.

[31] For the bill of exchange and the *fattori* in the history of banking in the early modern period, see R. de Roover, *Money, Banking, and Credit in Medieval Bruges*, «Journal of Economic History», 2 (1942 Supp.), pp. 52-65; Id., *Le contrat de change depuis la fin du treizième siècle jusqu'au début du dix-septième*, «Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire», 25 (1946-47), pp. 111-128; Id., *Money, Banking and Credit in Mediaeval Bruges: Italian Merchant-Bankers, Lombards, and Money Changers: A Study in the Origins of Banking*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1948; Id., *L'évolution de la lettre de change, XIVe-XVIIIe siècles*, A. Colin, Paris, 1953; Id., *New Interpretations of the History of Banking*, «Journal of World History», 2 (1954), pp. 38-76; J. Munro, *The Dawn of Modern Banking: Bullion Flows and Monetary Policies in England and the Low Countries, 1350-1500*, Variorum, Aldershot, 1992: http://www.economics.utoronto.ca/munro5/; Id., *The «New Institutional Economics» and the Changing Fortunes of Fairs in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: The Textile Trades, Warfare, and Transaction Costs*, in *Fiere e mercati nella integrazione delle economie europee, secc. XIII-XVIII, Atti della «Trentaduesima Settimana di Studi», 8-12 maggio 2000,* Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "F. Datini", 2001: http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/11029/; M. Rozen, *Ha-fatoriah: Pereq be-toledot ha-misḥar ha-yam tikhoni ba-me'ot ha-shesh 'esreh ve-ha-shev'a 'esreh* [The Fattoria: A Chapter in the History of Mediterranean Commerce in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries], in J. Chetrit, S. Fuks (eds.), *Miqqdem umiyyam* [From East and West], University of Haifa, Haifa, 1981, pp. 101-231; C.B. Johnson, *Cervantes and the Material World* cit., pp. 7-8, 74-75, 79-80, 185-186.

[32] For Bandinelli's birthplace, see D. Carpi, *The Activities of the Officials* cit., pp. 188-189, 191.

In this case, while the society could cover the sum, they preferred not to transfer it from their account in cash in Malta, thus in effect remaining in debt to the agent. These debts could be paid off when he instructed them to withdraw money from their account in order to make a transaction on his behalf in one of the locations to which they had access[33].

The Venetian minute book from the years 1654 to 1670 yields traces of this system, indicating that during this period money was not sent directly to the agent in Malta, and certainly not in cash, but through the mediation of additional parties. While the term *lettera di cambio* does not appear anywhere, this was the only way to conduct these transactions. The society deposited the money in *ducats* in Venice with a Venetian trader by the name of Pietro Castelli — the agent of the Dutch consul in Sicily, Giovanni Battista van den Broecke[34]. The van den Broeckes were one of the most active families in the international trade of the seventeenth century in the Mediterranean and the Indian and Atlantic Oceans[35]. For a certain period, they also maintained a trading house in Livorno, whose owner — Bernard van den Broecke — engaged in funding the ransoming of captives from the Hanseatic cities in North Africa until his firm went bankrupt in 1634. Thus they were specialists in this field[36].

Castelli issued a bill of exchange in Sicilian *scudi* equal in value to the *ducats* he received, minus his fee. The bill was sent to van den

[33] See allusions to this method in A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 389-390.

[34] J. Giltaij, *Ruffo en Rembrandt: Over een Siciliaanse verzamelaar in de zeventiende eeuw die drie schilderijen bij Rembrandt bestelde*, PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1997, p. 43.

[35] F.R. da Silva, *Crossing Empires: Portuguese, Sephardic, and Dutch Business Networks in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1580-1674*, «The Americas», 68.1 (2011), pp. 7-32; R.J. Barendse, *The Long Road to Livorno: The Overland Messenger Services of the Dutch East India Company in the Seventeenth Century*, «Itinerario», 12 (1988), pp. 25-43; A.D. Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Western Indian Ocean: The Early Seventeenth Century*, «Modern Asian Studies», 19.3 (1985), pp. 481-499; C.G. Brouwer, *Non-Western Shipping Movements in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden During the 2nd and 3rd Decades of the 17th Century, According to the Records of the Dutch East India Company (Part 2)*, «Die Welt des Islams», 32.1 (1992), pp. 6-40.

[36] For the van den Broecke family in Livorno, see M. Ressel, *Venice* cit.; A.P. McCormick, *Tuscany and the Low Countries: An Introduction to the Sources and an Inventory of Four Florentine Libraries*, Centro Di, Florence, 1984, pp. 68, 136; M.C. Engels, *Dutch Traders in Livorno at the Beginning of the Seventeenth Century: The Company of Joris Jansen and Bernard van den Broecke*, in C. Lesger, L. Noordegraaf (eds.), *Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship in Early Modern Times: Merchants and Industrialists within the Orbit of the Dutch Staple Market*, Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, The Hague, 1995, pp. 63-76.

Broecke, who had businesses in Malta. Sicily and Malta being quite close, the latter may have paid the money in cash to Bandinelli — or converted it into Maltese *scudi* after fixing his fee and then sent it to Bandinelli to pass on to the owners of the captives after he had determined his own fee[37]. The profit the agents gained from their relations with the ransom society is demonstrated by the fact that Thomas Luis da Silva took such great pains to enter the business. It was not only the fees involved[38]. In a letter sent by the Venetian ransom society to the rabbis and sages of Cairo and Alexandria in 1671, the former recount that a Jewish merchant from Egypt (it is not clear from which of the two communities) by the name of Yisrael Ashkenazi had been holding the sum of approximately two hundred and twenty *reales* belonging to François Garsin for seven years, due to a claim made by Shelomoh and David Mercado that Garsin's brother-in-law — Marc'Antonio Persigier — owed them this sum. Garsin declared vehemently that he had no hand in his brother-in-law's affairs and demanded his money. The society gave him their full support, backing it by noting the benefit Garsin brought to the captives on Malta[39]. The society also gave various gifts to the agents for their services as a sign of their good will[40]. The fact that Garsin was a member of the court tasked with restricting the Greek Orthodox traders' ability to curry favour in the papal court in Rome may indicate that he was first and foremost a merchant and a trader in pirate plunder.

As we shall see below, the business arrangements associated with the ransoming of captives can be adduced from sources other than the Jerusalem epistles in our possession and from their content. One of the members of the Venice society between 1668 and 1672 and between 1684 and 1686 was R. Shelomoh Abuhav. In a collection of his letters, seven missives have been preserved that were sent to Eretz Israel rabbis captured by the Maltese knights as they journeyed to raise funds for their communities. During the period in which they were written, though not a warden of the ransom society himself, Abuhav had close ties with the society and wielded great influence with them.

Three of the letters in this collection were written to R. Hayim Navarro, an emissary of the Safed community, who was captured

[37] D. Carpi, *The Activities of the Officials* cit., pp. 187-194.
[38] See also A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 389-390.
[39] C. Roth, *The History of Jewish Captives in Malta* cit., pp. 166-167.
[40] For the gifts given to A. Bandinelli, see D. Carpi, *The Activities of the Officials* cit., p. 187 n. 51. For those given to Garsin, see C. Roth, *The Jews of Malta* cit., pp. 224-225.

in 1647 or slightly earlier. The missives clearly indicate that the society did not believe that he could be ransomed before the money was raised in Venice — or at the very least promises had been given to cover the sum necessary for his ransom and the accompanying costs. Only after this information was gathered was the letter sent to Bandinelli, authorizing him to pay the ransom and send Navarro wherever he pleased — in effect constituting a bill of exchange[41].

Abuhav also sent three letters to a well-known sage and emissary of the Jerusalem community — R. Shemuel Garmizan, captured on the high seas in 1650[42]. These reveal that in the case of such a prominent personage the society hastened to write Bandinelli asking him to add to the regular ransom fees whatever was necessary to ensure his release. This was done despite their depleted coffers (almost certainly due to the number of captives ransomed in 1648/49) and their customary policy of not paying more than one hundred *reales* (one *reale* being equal in value to slightly more than a *kuru□ esedi*) per person or two hundred where additional sources were guaranteed[43]. In a response to R. Shelomoh Ashkenazi, a Safed emissary who informed Abuhav of his bitter fate as a captive in Messina, Abuhav wrote in 1651 that he had arranged for the ransom society to write to its agent in Messina that if they could ransom him with a hundred *reales* they would do so immediately. The letter leads us to understand that Abuhav and his brother paid the ransom fee to the society[44]. Quite possibly, the agent in question was van den Broecke, who was frequently asked to engage in the actual ransom of captives rather than merely transferring money[45].

The final letter written by Abuhav, on 24 September 1666, was to two Jerusalem sages held captive in Malta — Yehudah Saraf and Yisrael Benyamin. The latter was active in the Jerusalem community between 1635 and 1668, where he was a very prominent personage. At the time of his capture, he was a very old man[46]. The former was a sage who lived for a short while in Jerusalem and later became known

[41] M. Benayahu, *Letters to the Rabbis of Eretz Yisrael* cit., pp. 375-377.
[42] See M. Benayahu's introduction to Garmizan's responsa, *Mishpetei Tzedeq*, Yosef Eliyahu Shama, Jerusalem, 1945.
[43] M. Benayahu, *Letters to the rabbis of Eretz Yisrael* cit., pp. 377-378.
[44] *Ibid*., p. 379. For R. Shelomoh Ashkenazi, see *ibid*., p. 369.
[45] Cf. D. Carpi, *The Activities of the Officials* cit., p. 206.
[46] M. Rozen, *The Jewish Community of Jerusalem*, pp. 147-148. Benayahu erroneously believed the person under discussion to be Benyamin's nephew, who bore the same name. Amongst R. Mosheh Ibn Habib's sermons, however, we find the eulogy for the older Rabbi in 1669 on the anniversary of his death: see *ibid*.

as a Sabbatian; it is possible that he was accompanying Benyamin as his aide[47]. The letter indicates that they were captured by Maltese knights. When news of Benyamin's fate became known, the society turned to the *ricevitor* — the Order's commissioner in the Republic of Venice — to release them and the funds they had raised for the poor in Eretz Israel[48]. Abuhav wrote saying that the *ricevitor* had promised him that if they appealed to the French king the latter could compel the knights to release the vessel, its passengers, and cargo without the need for any money to change hands.

This affair calls to mind a case concerning which the society wrote to Bandinelli on 17 July 1659, the two possibly referring to the same event. The society's letter from 1659 indicates that due to the Ottoman's siege of Crete — under Venetian rule — between 1645 and 1669, Venetian vessels had taken to sailing under the French flag, enjoying the patronage of France, the Sublime Porte's ally. The *ricevitor* thus referred those seeking to ransom the captives to the French king. In this case, they turned to the Republic's rulers, who ordered the *ricevitor* to facilitate the release of the vessel and its passengers[49].

Since R. Yisrael Benyamin is not mentioned in the Jerusalem records for the lengthy period between 1650 and 1669, when R. Mosheh Ibn Habib eulogized him on the anniversary of his death, he may well have spent a good number of those years in captivity on Malta[50]. The discussion of this affair as reflected in the letters of the Venetian society officials indicates that the captives on whose behalf French intervention was sought were released in 1668 — nine years after their capture, and in the year when R. Yisrael Benyamin died in Jerusalem[51]. At the same time as they negotiated the release of R. Benyamin, the society also sought to ransom other captives in Malta whom the former had endeavoured to assist. With Bandinelli retiring that year, the money sent to Malta in bills of exchange for the ransom of the captives remained frozen there - together with the captives. Most of Abuhav's epistulary activity

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 215, 220; M. Benayahu, *Letters to the Rabbis of Eretz Yisrael* cit., pp. 371-374.
[48] The *recevitor* was responsible for the Order's assets and monies outside Malta: see A. Giuffrida, *La Sicilia e l'Ordine di Malta (1529-1550): La centralità della periferia mediterranea*, Associazione no profit «Mediterranea», Palermo, 2006, pp. 22-40; B. Navagero, *Dispacci da Roma (1555-1558)*, 41, Roma, 26 febbraio 1558: http://www.storiadivenezia.net/sito/testi/Navagero.pdf (accessed 26.1.2014).
[49] D. Carpi, The Activities of the Officials cit., p. 198.
[50] M. Rozen, *The Jewish Community of Jerusalem* cit., pp. 147-149.
[51] D. Carpi, *The Activities of the Officials* cit., pp. 198-201.

covers the time span of the Candia war, the lengthy Ottoman siege on the island of Crete (1645-1669), which caused a huge surge in Maltese piracy[52].

Abuhav also wrote to Mosheh Azoulay — a captive who had remained in residence on Malta and served as a kind of leader of the captives who came and went — for help with finding a replacement for Bandinelli, "a decent man, favourable to the Jews, wealthy, and with a good reputation amongst the officers to be appointed to this business, a paid position"[53]. The person Azoulay eventually found was François Garsin.

When an Istanbuli Jew by the name of Gallimidi was captured by the Maltese knights on his way from Istanbul to Cairo, the society became aware — apparently through Garsin - that he was being held on the island together with fifteen other captives. Instructing Garsin to pay the ransom fee, they also wrote on 16 September 1672 to the leaders of Istanbul community to clarify how much they had given — or would give — for this purpose, regarding the amount allocated for his release as insufficient[54]. This report cannot be taken at face value. The process initiated by the Venetian society as reflected in the letter intimates that Garsin paid the ransom, the society only then seeking to raise the money in Istanbul, Gallimidi's home town. The Istanbul community would then have turned to Gallimidi's relatives to raise the needed sum — not detailed in this case. This procedure was vital because some of the captives had no one to raise funds on their behalf, the society therefore acting on their behalf as well. Assisting the captives on Malta itself demanded funds, with the percentages collected by the agents adding further to the ransom costs.

In another incident in 1673 (described by Roth), Yitzhaq Moreno of Belgrade was taken captive along with his wife and three children. Although their captors demanded 575 *kuru□* for them, the fund only agreed to pay 300 *kuru□*. The pirates, however, were insistent. In this case, the ransom officials invoked the principle referred to above: "Prisoners should not be redeemed for unreasonably high sums, for the protection of society"[55]. Refusing to redeem them, they wrote the agent saying:

[52] A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 540-548.
[53] M. Benayahu, *Letters to the Rabbis of Eretz Yisrael* cit., pp. 369-380.
[54] C. Roth, *The History of Jewish Captives in Malta* cit., p. 168.
[55] See above, p. x, n. 4.

If said masters expect to obtain more for a useless old man, a sick woman, and three children (one of them blind), who have nothing to offer but (pardon the expression) lice, they are much mistaken.

Even when the captor threatened to convert one of the children, they did not back down[56]. The family's fate is unknown.

This case also merits a closer reading than Roth gave it. While the society estimated that the sale of the family would not bring their owners a sum close to that demanded of them and thus regarded it as pure blackmail, no evidence exists that it made any effort to raise the funds to ransom the family. Since this was an expense on its coffers that could not be balanced, the society instructed the agent to negotiate as hard as he could. The regular sum the society agreed to pay for a captive being 100-120 *kuru□*, the amount the owner demanded was not, in fact, exorbitant. This instance thus exemplifies the fact that an impoverished family with no connections, no standing, and no community to raise money (Belgrade being war-torn at the time) could not expect the Venetian society to go out of its way to ensure their ransom.

[56] C. Roth, *The Jews of Malta* cit., p. 229.

V

THE ACTIONS OF THE REDEMPTION OFFICIALS IN VENICE: EPISTLES FROM THE JERUSALEM MANUSCRIPT

In analyzing the missives from the Jerusalem manuscript collection, it is important to recall that the Jerusalem community was not in a position to raise funds for any prisoners, having more than enough troubles of its own[1]. It is therefore reasonable to ask why so many letters (in relation to the total number of epistles in the manuscript), spanning such a brief period, deal with the redemption of captives. The answer rests in part on the fact that eight of the prisoners were captured on their way to the Holy Land, suggesting that the leaders of the Jerusalem community had a certain interest in ransoming them. The remainder of the answer lies in the connection between the background given above and the content of the letters.

Four missives were composed to assist captives who had been released in raising money for their subsistence[2]. It is not clear whether they were penned in Jerusalem in order to aid the unfortunates to raise money in other places or whether the latter had arrived in Jerusalem with letters of recommendation from other locales. In the case of the captive who had been forced to labour as an oarsman and gone blind, the letter states: "The other captives took upon themselves the full debt to his master, and sent him here accompanied by a non-Jew, and we were obliged to pay such-and-such a sum". In other words, they instructed the agent in Malta to increase their own ransom sum so that it would cover the blind man. The man was sent to Venice with a Christian escort, apparently rep-

[1] M. Rozen, *The Jewish Community of Jerusalem* cit., pp. 21-74, 181-185, 274-281.

[2] Appendix, document I (n. 54 Jerusalem Ms.), II (n.148 Jerusalem Ms.), IV (n. 164 Jerusalem Ms.), and V(n.196 Jerusalem Ms.).

resenting the agent, thus forcing the society officials to pay for his ransom as well. On occasion, the society was thus faced with *faits accomplis*, the harsh reality leaving them no choice but to reconcile themselves to taking actions they were hard put to afford[3].

In another case — that of a captive who was shackled for three years in Messina — the society officials decided to send a bill of exchange to pay for his ransom despite not having any financial coverage for the payment[4]. After his release, they provided him with a letter of recommendation so that he could raise funds to repay them. This much can be assumed from the letter found in the Jerusalem collection. Here, too, it is not clear whether the letter constitutes a recommendation from the Jerusalem community on behalf of the person or that of another community to that in Jerusalem. We do know, however, that the released captive found neither funds nor support in Jerusalem.

As Daniel Carpi has demonstrated, the society's correspondence also reflects this practice[5]. On one occasion, it sent letters to the Jewish communities in order to raise funds for the ransom coffers and secure the release of an elderly couple who were sold:

> in a slave auction to hard masters and forced into hard labour with bricks, mortar, and stones, afflicted with heavy blows and iron fetters from morning to evening, beaten naked, exposed to the searing heat by day and the biting cold by night until they turned red and their flesh rotted off them like pomegranate seeds[6].

The affair of the captive who appears to have been made to work in a marble mine and was ransomed by an unknown person who took him to Alexandria becomes clearer in light of the details cited above[7]. Upon arriving in Alexandria with his "benefactor", he was committed to repaying him the sum. The Alexandrian leaders paid his owner the amount for his ransom on condition that he himself undertook to repay them the sum, sending him to various communities in order to collect the money[8].

[3] Cf. D. Carpi, *The Activities of the Officials* cit., p. 197. Compare with A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 388-389.
[4] Appendix, document III (n. 155 Jerusalem Ms.).
[5] Cf. the case of the ransom of Joseph Ergas and Reuben Crescas (D. Carpi, *The Activities of the Officials* cit., p. 196).
[6] Appendix, document IX (n. 207 Jerusalem Ms.).
[7] Appendix, document VIII (n. 205 Jerusalem Ms.).
[8] Cf. D. Hershenzon, *Early Modern Spain* cit., pp. 181-182. Compare with A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 388-389.

A similar picture emerges from the case of the Salonikan family captured twice on their way to Eretz Israel. On the second occasion, the father was sent to raise funds for the ransom of the rest of the family[9]. This practice of sending a captive on *dispegno* ("pledge") was quite prevalent, no certificate of release being granted to the person until he had repaid the ransom fee to his captor or his representative[10].

The most interesting of the epistles bears the heading: "Good and important words for captives", which deals with the capture of thirty-four people on board a single vessel for whom around 15,000 *kuru□* were demanded in ransom (about 441 for each person) — a huge sum in relation to what the society was accustomed to paying[11]. Here, too, it either could not or would not pay the amount. Understanding that they would not see more than 3,000-4,000 *kuru□*, the captors sent two of the captives to various communities to raise the rest. The details of this case are identical to those in the Venetian society correspondence from 1654 describing a group of twenty-four captives held under extremely harsh conditions, on whose behalf the society only succeeded in raising 5,000 *reales* of the ransom demanded. One of the captives who had already been released through another deal travelled around "under pledge" to raise the remainder of the sum. The Venetian society refused to provide any more money because even the 5,000 *reales* paid had been borrowed on credit. None of those involved considered the possibility of evading the responsibility of raising the ransom fee for the captives left behind[12].

As we delve into the maze of details from all these sources, the original portrait takes on added nuances, the wrenching personal stories, violence and cruelty, and displays of compassion and solidarity amongst Jews forming only part of the picture. The information gleaned from the Jerusalem epistles, along with other sources,

[9] Appendix, document VI (n. 197 Jerusalem Ms.).
[10] D. Carpi, *The Activities of the Officials* cit., p. 191. See also Á. Nógrády, *A List of Ransom for Ottoman Captives Imprisoned in Croatian Castles (1492)*, in G. David, P. Fodor (eds.), *Ransom Slavery Along the Ottoman Borders (Early Fifteenth-Early Eighteenth Centuries)*, Brill, Leiden, 2007, pp. 30-31; G. Pálffy, *Ransom Slavery Along the Ottoman-Hungarian Frontier in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, in *ibid.*, pp. 59-68; Boubaker, Réseaux cit., pp. 33-35; D. Hershenzon, *Early Modern Spain* cit., pp.164-165, and 182, note 497.
[11] Appendix, document VII (n. 202 Jerusalem Ms.).
[12] D. Carpi, *The Activities of the Officials* cit., pp. 190-191, 204; A. Brogini, *Intermédiaires* cit.

reveals a sophisticated, multi-faceted world of business that was reliant upon relations of mutual trust — not only between the officials in Venice and their agents (and vice versa) but also between pirates and ransomers. At face value, this aspect of mutual trust between the parties to these transactions seems incredible. These were people who had never met before the violent act that brought them together, and most likely would never meet again after the completion of the deal; thus the reciprocal trust created in "normal" business relations did not exist[13]. However, the Venice officials, having used permanent agents in Malta, Sicily and other places, laid the foundation for such a system of mutual trust, since their agents were always a place where unsatisfied parties could turn[14]. The financial data similarly demonstrate the insurance aspect of the Venetian ransom society and the link between the captives' socioeconomic status and their chances of being ransomed by the society.

Despite not having the means with which to assist ransomed souls who had become impoverished or those sent "under pledge", the letters found in the Jerusalem archive address such cases — reflecting the fact that such desperate individuals went to every length possible (literally and figuratively) to raise funds. Their presence also suggests that lack of funds notwithstanding, the Jerusalem community was regarded as a "good address" for referrals to other communities, its sanctity adding greater weight and aiding the captive in accomplishing his task. Finally, one must consider the "subversive" notion that destitute captives whose ransom had been paid by the fund in Venice without any outside help were sent (following their release) from one community to the next, telling their tale of woe and collecting donations to pay back to the ransom fund some portion of the money expended on their release. Although this cannot be proven, it should be borne in mind as a possibility[15].

[13] D. Hershenzon, *Early Modern Spain* cit., p. 149.
[14] Compare with A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 385-398.
[15] Cf. D. Hershenzon, *Early Modern Spain* cit., p. 182, note 497.

VI
THE JEWISH RANSOM ENTERPRISES IN WESTERN EUROPE

The significance of the ransom enterprise and its centre in Venice must be assessed within the context of the overall Jewish ransom efforts undertaken by the Sephardi communities. As already noted, the Venetian community was among the very few whose ransom efforts were not based on voluntary activity. The abundance of written evidence generated by its activities indicates that it served in some sense as an "insurance company". This aspect was manifested in the unequal treatment of the captives. As the Venetian effort was the spiritual progenitor of similar enterprises in other Sephardi communities in Western Europe, we must examine the latter's nature and the factors that distinguished them.

The first initiative was undertaken by the Pisan community, whose principal concern lay with captives taken to Livorno on board vessels belonging to the knights of the Order of St. Stephen[1]. Since the latter operated primarily against pirates and merchant ships from the shores of North Africa, we may surmise that the majority of these captives were from this region, meaning North African Jews — mainly from Morocco — as opposed to Livornese or Pisans. Their numbers were not great, and the activity was voluntary, as the need arose[2].

The institution of the *deputados de cautivos*, the officials in charge of the captives, in Livorno was created in 1606 — thirteen years after the community was founded in the city in the wake of the charter

[1] V. Salvadorini, *Traffici con i paesi islamici e schiavi a Livorno nel XVII secolo: problemi e suggestioni*, in *Livorno e il Mediterraneo nell'età medicea*, U. Bastoni, Livorno, 1978, pp. 206-255.
[2] R. Toaff, *La Nazione Ebrea a Livorno e a Pisa (1591-1700)*, Leo Olschki, Florence, 1990, pp. 78-79, 269.

issued by Ferdinando I de' Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, that assured all persons desirous of settling in Livorno of extensive rights and privileges irrespective of their legal or religious past (1593)[3]. The importance of the Livornese ransom society is attested to by the fact that, after Malta, the second most important destination to which the letters of the Venetian ransom society was sent between 1654 and 1670 was the *deputados de cautivos* in Livorno, where Jews frequently traded in pirate plunder from North Africa and thus committed themselves to ransoming captives west of the city[4]. As in Venice, here too the society was not voluntary, forming part of the community's institutions funded by a tax on imports and exports and administered by *deputados de cautivos*[5]. In 1615, the rabbinic authorities in Livorno requested that their counterparts in Venice rule that whoever did not pay the tax would fall under a ban — reflecting the fact that it was not easy to collect[6]. While they might be said to have been taking care of the spiritual wellbeing of their flock by compelling them to give to charity, the necessity of the tax also reflects the high risk of Jewish traders in Livorno, like Venice, being taken captive by pirates.

A year later, the Pisan traders decided to stop paying the tax on the grounds that they had established their own ransom fund. The leaders of the Livorno community appealed to the Grand Duke of Tuscany's court, asking him to force the Pisan traders to continue to share in the burden of the tax. After a complicated discussion, the Duke stipulated that the Pisan traders could not be forced to pay the tax levied by Livorno and could operate their own mechanisms for ransoming captives[7].

This affair provides information beyond what we can glean at first glance. When the Pisan traders ransomed captives brought to Livorno prior to the establishment of the Jewish community in the city, they did so *per carita* — as an act of charity — in order not to leave captives suffering simply because they were Jewish and lacked

[3] A. Milano, *Gli antecedenti della "Livornina" del 1593*, «La Rassegna Mensile di Israel», (Third Series) 37.6 (1971), pp. 343-360; L.F. Fischer, S. Villani, *"People of Every Mixture": Immigration, Tolerance and Religious Conflicts in Early Modern Livorno*, «Nuovi Studi Livornesi», 1 (1993), pp. 1-21. For the charter, see: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/19688/19688-h/19688-h.htm (accessed 18.12.2013).

[4] D. Carpi, *L'attività della "Cassa per il riscatto degli schiavi" della Comunità ebraica di Livorno negli anni 1654-1670*, «Materia Giudaica», 10.1 (2005), pp. 123-124.

[5] G. Laras, *La "Compagnia per il riscatto degli schiavi" di Livorno*, «Rassegna Mensile di Israel», 38.7-8 (1970), pp. 90-91,108.

[6] D. Carpi, *L'attività* cit., p. 124.

[7] R. Toaff, *La Nazione Ebrea* cit., p. 80.

the wherewithal to raise money for their release from the hands of Gentiles. This motive is evident, for example, in the description of the captives who were made to work seven days a week on a construction site, whose lament over having to violate the Sabbath tore the hearts of the Pisan community's leaders[8]. It is also manifest in the enslavement of a group of young Jews from Tetuan in northern Morocco, who were maltreated by the physician of the customs office in Livorno, Dr. Bernardetto Boromei[9].

The Pisan Jews not being maritime traders themselves, the chances that they would have to ransom one of their own community, or someone linked to them in some way other than religious ties, were slim. When the Livorno community was established, however, its members — many of whom were traders with particularly close ties with North Africa — quickly understood the imperative of creating a ransom mechanism, also seeking to share the burden with the Pisan community, which benefited from the growth of its younger sister. At this juncture, the Livornese asked the Pisan community to participate in the mandatory tax, which it reluctantly agreed to, doing its best to avoid paying it.

The letters from the Venetian ransom society indicate that it also had close ties with its counterparts in Amsterdam, London, and Hamburg, all of whom worked closely together in their efforts to release Jewish captives[10]. Like their Livornese brethren, the Amsterdam community imposed special taxes to raise money for the ransom of captives. Starting in late 1638, Article 37 of the regulations of the "Talmud Torah" congregation in Amsterdam — which united all the Sephardic Jews in the city — mandated the appointment of special officers to administer the Eretz Israel and ransom funds. In 1640, an ex-Franciscan monk of *conversos* origin who had returned to Judaism and taken the name Elazar de Solis was appointed to the post[11]. When Daniel Levi de Barios described the Amsterdam

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 268.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 269.

[10] D. Carpi, *L'attività* cit., p. 124; R.D. Barnett, *The Correspondence of the Mahamad of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation of London during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, «Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England», 20 (1959-61), pp. 37-39; C. Roth, *Anglo-Jewish Letters (1158-1917)*, Soncino, London, 1938, pp. 76-78.

[11] See E. Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom* cit., p. 263; A.J. Saraiva, *The Marrano Factory: The Portuguese Inquisition and its New Christians 1536-1765*, Brill, Leiden, 2001, p. 202 n. 33.

community's structure around 1680, he noted, inter alia, the existence of a ransom society run by a clerk appointed by the *ma'amad* — the community leaders. Although not an important community institution, it nonetheless formed part of its administrative system. According to de Barios, an annual budget of three hundred *florins* was allocated to the society, drawn from the *imposta* - the tax on the import and export trade conducted by Jewish merchants that was collected twice a year, on Shabbat Ha-Gadol (the Great Sabbath) before Passover and the eve of the Day of Atonement[12].

The common features of the Venetian, Livornese, and Amsterdam ransom funds, the mandatory tax they imposed, and their reputations as large trading communities suggest that all three communities felt the need to protect their members against being taken captive by pirates. Other motives were also involved in the case of Amsterdam, however.

Those most at risk of being taken captive at sea by North African corsairs were the Portuguese *nação*, among them New Christians on Spanish vessels or New Christians who had returned to Judaism in Livorno and sailed under the flag of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. Such captives usually sought to escape their grim fate by declaring that, having returned to Judaism, they were on their way to Ottoman lands. In a letter sent by the treasurers of the Venetian ransom society — Abraham Abuhav, Gabriel Habibi, and Isaac Hamim — on 21 February 1636 (15 Adar 5396) to the *ma'amad* in Amsterdam, delivered via David Ergas, the writers asked for the Amsterdam community's help in ransoming several "Jews from Spain" on their way to returning to Judaism, as well as some Salonikan Jews, all of whom had been taken captive by Algerian pirates.

The continuation of the letter makes it clear that the "Spanish Jews" were in fact "Portuguese Jews" who claimed to be returning to Judaism and must have been taken captive on a Spanish, Portuguese, Tuscan or French vessel. Although the precise nature of their journey remains obscure, their captors undoubtedly regarded them as Christians. Having been captured, they could either seek the assistance of the Christian ransom organizations on the Iberian

[12] K.R. Scholberg, *Miguel de Barrios and the Amsterdam Sephardic Community*, «Jewish Quarterly Review», (New Series) 53.2 (1962), p. 128; H. Brugmans, A. Frank, *De Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland*, Van Holkema & Warendorf n. v., Amsterdam, 1940, vol. 1, pp. 226, 244, 265-266, 278.

Peninsula or turn to the Venetian (Jewish) society[13]. Their chances of being aided by Iberian organizations as New Christians probably being slim, they may well have preferred to turn to the Venetian society — especially if they were truly seeking to return to Judaism. Collecting 1500 *florins* from each of the three congregations in the city, the Amsterdam community leaders sent the sum to the Venetian society with instructions that 1000 *florins* were to be used for the ransom of the Portuguese "brethren" and 500 for the ransom of the Salonikan captives. Anything left over from the 1000 *florins* should be kept in case any other "Portuguese Jews" required ransoming rather than given to help the Salonikan Jews[14].

On 7 April 1639 (3 Nisan 5399), the *ma'amad* decided to send 600 *florins* to the Venetian society for the ransom of a "Portuguese" captive by the name of Samuel Ramires, captured on his way from Zeeland (Gelanda) to Italy[15]. No mention is made of where he was captured or by whom. The following year, the community received a request to aid in ransoming an uncircumcised "Portuguese youth from our nation" being held captive in Tunis. The Amsterdam rabbinical authorities having apparently been asked whether money destined for ransoming captives could be used to redeem a person living "outside Judaism", the funds were eventually provided on condition that he be circumcised immediately following his release[16]. The question regarding his circumcision is of particular interest in light of the fact that the circumcision of the "Portuguese Jews" who claimed that they were on their way to a "place of Judaism" is never discussed in the texts at our disposal, and is not mentioned as a condition for paying their ransom.

The Amsterdam fund also helped ransom New Christians who fell into the hands of the Inquisition[17]. At the same time, it made a

[13] For the Iberian organizations, see below.

[14] I.S. Emmanuel, *Qesharim bein qehilot saloniqi ve-amsterdam* [Links between the Salonika and Amsterdam Communities], in B. Uziel (ed.), *Ginzakh saloniqi* [Salonika Archives], Institute for the Study of Salonikan Jewry, Tel Aviv, 1960, 1:24. My thanks to Prof. Y. Kaplan who deciphered the minute book (due to be published) and sent me the copy he made of the relevant page. The original document is found in the Libro dos termos de imposta de naçao, p. 59.

[15] Libro dos termos de imposta de naçao, p. 59.

[16] M. Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 1999, pp. 139-140.

[17] J.I. Israel, *Dutch Sephardi Jewry, Millenarian Politics and the Struggle for Brazil (1640-1654)*, in J. Israel, D.S. Katz (eds.), *Sceptics, Millenarians and Jews*, Brill, Leiden, 1990, pp. 91-92, 94.

great effort to redeem the 1648/49 captives from the slave market in Istanbul[18]. During the second half of the seventeenth century, the Amsterdam community also made repeated efforts to ransom war victims from various Ashkenazi communities[19]. Money transfers were conducted in every region via different agents, the money being sent to Venice if the captives had been taken in the Eastern Mediterranean (Maltese captives) or to Istanbul or Venice if they were being auctioned on the Istanbul market. Captives held in North Africa were ransomed via Livorno[20]. In the majority of cases, the method through which the money was transferred was the same as that used by the Venice society officials — i.e., bills of exchange[21].

The redemption activities in the Low Countries were connected to economic and diplomatic relations with the Muslim world. During the seventeenth century, the Dutch continued to fight the Spaniards, the avowed enemies of the Ottoman Empire. Spain and Portugal were also viewed as enemies by the Muslim rulers of Morocco. A Jewish merchant from Amsterdam could thus frequently be a business associate, agent, or even partner of a North African Muslim, and thus have no reason to fear captivity while sailing on a Dutch ship[22]. Whereas this was always the case vis-à-vis the Moroccan sultanate, it was not always true with regard to other pirate regencies. The other regencies, which were proxies of the Ottoman Empire, did not always obey the Ottoman sultan, sometimes attacking Dutch merchant vessels. During the short period of Dutch cooperation with Spain (1618-1621), this was a commendable act even from the point of view of Istanbul[23]. Thus, the situation of a Jew taken captive on a Dutch ship depended on the relations of the pirates themselves with the Sublime Porte. If captured on a Tuscan ship, however, a Jew was always fair game.

The Jews of Amsterdam were well aware of the consequences of piracy — perhaps not as intensely as the Livornese community

[18] S.W. Baron, *The Jewish Community: Its History and Structure to the American Revolution*, Greenwood Press, Westport CT, 1972, p. 307; E. Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom* cit., p. 264 n. 1. For the war captives, see Y. Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe*, Brill, Leiden, 2000, pp. 60, 96 and the bibliography cited on p. 61.
[19] Y. Kaplan, *An Alternative Path* cit., p. 61 and the bibliography cited.
[20] E. Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom* cit., pp. 266-268.
[21] M. Grunwald, *Portugiesengräber auf deutscher Erde: Beiträge zur Kultur-und Kunstgeschichte*, A. Janssen, Hamburg, 1902, pp. 24-25.
[22] A.H. De Groot, *Ottoman North Africa* cit., pp. 131-147.
[23] See below, note 259.

but nonetheless just as intimately. At the same time, the most significant aspect of the Dutch ransom society's activities lay in its members' sense of sharing a common fate with the members of the *nação*, including those who, while not circumcised, openly hoped for redemption at Jewish hands. The aid they extended to other Jews taken captive — even if these were Ashkenazim — must be understood as a form of widening the circle.

While the other Portuguese communities in Western Europe followed the lead of the Venetian, Livornese, and Amsterdam communities, some minor differences can be discerned. A ransom fund seems to have been established in Hamburg as early as the first half of the seventeenth century, its name — Camara de Cautivos de Venezia — suggesting that it formed a branch of the Venetian society. Yet although it formed an integral part of the community apparatus, up until 1757 its income derived primarily from donations, wills, and special contributions. In that year, a tax of 3% on Jewish property and 2% on annual income was imposed on each taxpayer, also applying to foreign traders trading in the city[24]. In the middle of the seventeenth century, the fund transferred sums to the Venetian society "on behalf of Maltese captives" virtually every year. It also helped the relatives of captives who came to the city to collect money to ransom their loved ones, as well as transferring monies to the Venetian society to aid the 1648/49 captives and those captured in other wars in Eastern Europe[25].

In late 1663, only a few years after its founding, the Sephardi Shaʿar ha-Shamayim community in London instituted a set of regulations that included the creation of a fund for ransoming captives, separate from the fund designated for Eretz Israel[26]. Only in 1689, however, did it appoint a *parnas dos cautivos* whose office was dedicated exclusively to this task[27]. According to the 1663 regulations, all "members of the nation [i.e., Spanish and Portuguese Jews], native as foreigners" had to pay the *imposta* — a tax imposed twice yearly, eight days before Shabbat Ha-Gadol (the Sat-

[24] E. Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom* cit., pp. 266-268.
[25] C. Roth, *History of the Jews in Venice*, Schocken, New York, 1975, p. 160; E. Bashan, *Captivity and Ransom* cit., p. 266.
[26] El Libro de Los Acuerdos: Being the Records and Accompts of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of London from 1663 to 1681, trans. L.D. Barnett, *Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation*, London, 1931, p. 13.
[27] A.M. Hayamson, *The Sepharadim of England: A History of the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Community 1492-1951*, Methuen & Co., London, 1951, p. 81.

urday before Passover) and Rosh Ha-Shana (the Jewish New Year), respectively, on all trade conducted in the city, including transit trade[28]. While I have found no sources to indicate that the ransom fund benefited from this tax, it may well have done so. We do know that it profited from donations and inheritances[29].

The fund's account books for the period from 1676 to the end of the century indicate that, up until 1693, small sums of money — less than £10 — were given to individuals from various locations and backgrounds who requested aid for the ransom of their family members, among them: an emissary from Istanbul whose name is not noted (1676); Isaac Ruiz Nuñez for the ransom of his wife (1685); an anonymous poor man from Sala in Morocco for the ransom of his wife; Meir Yerushalmi (1692), and Jacob Torres, also from Sala (1693). With the exception of one case — in which £70 was sent in cash in the hands of a London Jewish trader, Jacob Gomes Serra, for the ransom of captives in Germany — the rest of the sums were sent in the form of bills of exchange or letters of credit. Judging from the year in which the sum was sent to Germany (1687), the captives for whom the monies were intended were associated with the war between the Ottomans and Austrians that began that year. The monies sent by bills of exchange were dispatched to the Venetian society for the ransom of Jews who had fallen into the hands of Venetians during the conquest of Coron (the Venetian name of the Ionian island of Koroni) (1686), and to the Amsterdam fund, once again for the ransom of Belgrade captives (1689).

From 1695 onwards, all funds - both small and large — were sent via bills of exchange to traders "from the nation" in Amsterdam — such as Abraham Fernandez Miranda for the ransom of the family of Elia Hacohen of Bobruysk, "a Polish man from Lithuania" (1695) in Livorno; Jacob de Paz (1695), who was instructed to transfer the money to Moses Francia, who in turn was to forward the money to Istanbul at the request of the community there (1695); and Judah Crespino to help ransom the family of Naphtali Levi (1696)[30]. Bills of exchange from Moses Henriques de Mesquita and Isaac Henriques Ferra (or Serra) were sent to the account of Dr. Jaime Gabala in Cádiz for the ransom of Gabriel Henriques

[28] El Libro de Los Acuerdos cit., pp. 1-2.

[29] In the community's accounts for 1676, the sum of £12.8 appears in the *promesas* for the ransom fund (*ibid.*, p. 101).

[30] For Francia, see Y. Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity* cit., pp. 159, 162.

and Daniel da Costa, being held captive in Ceuta in Morocco opposite Gibraltar (1689). Pinhas Serra sent bills to the account of Moses de Abraham Franco in Livorno to pass on to the Tunisian community leaders for the ransom of a Jewish couple held captive there (1698). Others were sent to Jacob de Paz in Livorno to pass on to the leaders of the Safed community for the ransom of Jewish captives in Tripoli (1698) and to Frances Karvalho Nuñez in Venice to help ransom Jewish captives from Sarajevo (1699). The last sum delivered via this method during the seventeenth century was sent to Amsterdam and thence apparently to Venice for the ransom of Judah Angel, being held captive on Malta[31]. While the Hamburg and London communities may therefore have contributed less than Amsterdam for the redemption of captives, unlike their Dutch counterparts they displayed no preference for "their own".

A comparison of the funds operated by the communities of New Christians who returned to Judaism in the Western Mediterranean and Western Europe with those of the Jewish communities established in the wake of the first wave of Jewish migration from the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century reveals that differences existed not only between but also within the two groups. While the New Christians in Venice, when they came to establish a Jewish community for themselves, were surrounded by Jews who had always lived as Jews, those who migrated from Spain and Portugal from the late sixteenth century onwards to Livorno, Amsterdam, Hamburg, and London had to "invent" their Jewishness anew — the closest example at hand being that of the Venetian community, whose statutes and ways they sought to imitate.

Whereas the port cities of Venice, Livorno, and Amsterdam all imposed a mandatory tax to raise money for ransom efforts, in the older coastal communities of the Eastern Mediterranean only foreign traders were subject to its payment. The fact that it was applied to everyone in the newer communities is understandable with respect to Venice and Livorno, their merchants being at constant risk of falling captive. The Amsterdam community's decision to transform the tax into a mandatory payment to be paid by everyone can also be understood in light of its investment in the ransom of New Christians captured as Spanish or Portuguese subjects in North Africa and of those caught in the hands of

[31] R.D. Barnett, *The Correspondence of the Mahamad* cit., pp. 41-42.

the Inquisition whom it was possible to ransom with money. Likewise, though it exhibited a clear preference for ransoming "those of the nation" over others, it also displayed great largesse towards Ashkenazi Jews — a tendency that contrasts with its usual policy of not welcoming Jews other than those from the Iberian Peninsula or their offspring[32].

While the Hamburg and London communities may have contributed less than their counterparts in Amsterdam, they ransomed all captives equally, including Ashkenazim, suggesting that the fund was more a charitable organization than an "insurance company" or business-related affair in these communities. Not only were they at a far greater distance from pirate activity but they were also at a similar remove from Ashkenazi Jews in Poland and Lithuania. Their policy in this regard is of great interest in light of the fact that, like the Amsterdam community, they preferred to close ranks in all other matters and prevent Ashkenazim from settling in their cities. While we cannot determine conclusively whether their ransom efforts were motivated by religious considerations — to which the Venetian ransom officials who requested their aid appealed — as New Christians they knew firsthand from their move from "the lands of the heathen" to "the place of Judaism" how desperate the need could be[33]. As a result, despite their aversion to Ashkenazim they harboured sentiments that could prompt them to help ransom Jews different from themselves. Likewise, and no less importantly, as Christians who had returned to Judaism for whom keeping the commandments was not an easy matter, ransoming captives was an ordinance they could observe in a relatively straightforward manner. It was only money.

Two clear lines can thus be discerned regarding the motives of the people and communities who engaged in ransoming captives. A Jew knew that only another Jew would ransom him. In contributing to the ransoming of captives, he not only observed a commandment but also knew deep down that the wheel always turns full circle. Similarly, communities that experienced piracy in a very concrete sense related to the ransoming of captives far more urgently than those that did not, regarding the act not merely as a religious commandment or demonstration of compassion towards their suffering nation but also as a necessity for their business and livelihood.

[32] Y. Kaplan, *An Alternative Path* cit., pp. 78-107.

[33] For the reasoning the Venetian fund's members gave the London community, see C. Roth, *Anglo-Jewish Letters* cit., p. 76.

VII

MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN RANSOMING OF CAPTIVES

Jews being only a tiny minority amongst the Christian and Muslim traders and sailors liable to fall captive into one another's hands, we can reasonably ask how other societies related to the ransoming of their citizens. In the majority of cases, when Islam addresses the issue of captives it refers to non-Muslims captured by Muslims. The Quran commands that such captives be released at the end of a war as a sign of mercy or for a sum of money — an attitude that may reflect reluctance to taint a "holy war" with the whiff of defeat[1]. By contrast, allusions to Muslims captured by others are only indirect, our knowledge about them coming from rare references in the literature of Muslim jurists[2] or, more frequently, from actual cases. The early chapters of this history — the ninth through fourteenth centuries — revolve around the contacts between Islam and Christianity, primarily at the intersection between Byzantium and the Fatimid State, North Africa, and Spain. Certain aspects of this practice suggest a commitment on the part of Muslim states to ransom Muslims captured by Christians. The Egyptian chronicler al-Maqrizi (1364-1442), relates that there is no

[1] Quran, Sura 47.4-5. See A.A. Al Koosy, *Prisoners in Holy War between Theology and Law: A Muslim Reading of the Fifth-Sixth Century of the Hejira-Eleventh-Twelfth Christian Century*, in G. Cipollone (ed.), *La liberazione dei "captivi" tra Cristianitá e Islam*, Cittá al Vatticano, 2000, pp. 621-628; Y. Friedman, *Encounter Between Enemies: Captivity and Ransom in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Brill, Leiden, 2002, p. 4.

[2] Y. Frenkel, Fikāk al-Asīr, *The Ransom of Muslim Captives in the Mamlūk Sultanat*, in H. Grieser, N. Friesching (eds.), *Gefangenen Loskauf im Mittelmeerraum* cit., pp. 145-151.

information regarding redemption of Muslim captives during the Umayyad Caliphate (661-750). The first ransom of such captives occurred in the Abbasid period, but the operation was limited and diffused. Only under Harun al-Rashid (763-809) did redemption of Muslim captives became a state-organized activity. Al-Maqrizi lists twelve such ransom incidents that occurred between 937/8 and 804/5 in the town of al-Lamas near Tartus on the Syrian coast[3].

The Jerusalem geographer Muhammad al-Muqaddasi (ca. 985) describes in detail the signalling system along the coast of Fatimid Eretz Israel that served the ransoming business. A chain of fortresses (*rabatat*) from the various ports visited by Byzantine vessels carrying Muslim captives extended inland up to Ramle. When a Byzantine vessel reached one of the coastal fortresses, a chain of signals was set off between the fortresses, people from all over the country coming to ransom the captives[4]. Here, the redemption of captives merges religious sentiments with communal ties and acts of mercy[5]. At the same time, other examples from the same period indicate that the ransom of captives was not an absolute rule: sometimes Muslim rulers preferred the execution of Christian captives over the exchange of prisoners, and even favored keeping sacred objects rather than ransoming a great number of Muslim captives[6]. In subsequent centuries, the attitude of Muslim states towards Muslims in Christian captivity continued to vacillate between active initiatives aimed at ransoming them or exchanging them with enemy prisoners and violent attacks to achieve the same end[7].

The Mamlūk state as well as the Muslim states in North Africa and Spain, ensured that clauses regarding the exchange and release of captives were incorporated into their agreements with Christian countries–making efforts to ransom their captives. The moment a captive was defined as having been "legally" captured and not falling under these agreements, he could expect to be ran-

[3] A. Elad, *'Arei ha-hof shel eretz yisrael ba-tequfah ha-'arvit (640-1099 la-sfirah ha-notzrit) 'al pi meqorot 'arviyim* [The Coastal Cities of Palestine in the Arabic Period (640-1099 CE) according to Arabic Sources], «Cathedra», 2 (1982), p. 177.

[4] Y. Frenkel, *Fikāk al-As□r* cit., p. 153; A. Elad, *The Coastal Cities of Palestine* cit., pp. 170-172; Abū Abd Allāh Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm fì Mahrifat al-Aqālīm*, ed. and trans. G.S.A. Ranking, R.F. Azoo, Calcutta, 1897, p. 291.

[5] See also Y. Friedman, *Encounter Between Enemies* cit., pp. 3-4.

[6] Y. Frenkel, *Fikāk al-Asīr* cit., p. 147.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 151-154.

somed either by Muslims resident in Christian countries (*Mudéjar*) or from *Dar-al-Islam* — most frequently as the result of communal or individual initiatives. An interesting account, reminiscent of al-Muqaddasi's description, is offered in the first half of the fourteenth century by the Sufi scholar Muhammad al-Sahili, who writes of the Muslims of Malaga streaming to the beach where a Christian vessel was moored and collecting the money necessary to ransom the Muslim captives aboard[8].

The Ottoman Empire established no funds tasked with ransoming Muslim captives from the hands of Christian captors. Although Sadok Boubaker observes that Marabout mystic brotherhoods worked on behalf of captured Muslims in North Africa, he only refers to the effort of the brotherhood led by Abül-Ghayth al Qashshāsh of Tunis, who dedicated part of the group's large profits — it had branches in Tunis, Damietta in Egypt, Syria, and Malta — to the ransom of captives[9]. One of the brotherhoods' members on Malta — a released captive — served as Qadi to the other Muslim captives, helping mediate their release[10].

Muslim vessels were no less at risk of attack by Christians than the latter were by the North African corsairs. In the seventeenth century, there were hundreds of Muslim captives in Christian Europe. Interestingly, however, no evidence exists to suggest that Muslim states attempted to ransom their vessels, traders, or passengers when taken captive by Christian pirates[11]. Retaliation rather than ransom was the preferred Muslim strategy. A Jewish trader from Alexandria, writing to another Jewish trader apparently in Cairo, refers to his attempts to resolve diplomatic — and business — affairs, which led to just such a response.

Preserved in the Cairo Genizah and apparently written in the middle of the sixteenth century, the letter describes how a captain by the name of Ali Numayr al-Rashidi misnavigated and anchored in the port of Syracuse in Sicily in the middle of the night on the erroneous assumption that he was in al-Mahdiya in Tunisia. When the bells began to ring before dawn, the vessel's hands realized

[8] K.A. Miller, *Guardians of Islam: Religious Authority and Muslim Communities of Late Medieval Spain*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2013, pp. 155-156.

[9] S. Boubaker, *Réseaux* cit., pp. 27-34, 42.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

[11] N. Matar, *Britain and Barbary 1589-1689*, University Press of Florida, Gainseville, 2006, pp. 111-132.

that they were in a Christian port and sought to flee. The Sicilians sent several skiffs after them and boarded the vessel, returning it to port. Not long afterwards, when a Venetian galleon from Candia (Crete) anchored in Alexandria, the Ottoman governor of Egypt, having been informed that Captain al-Rashidi had been sailing with an *aman* — a certificate of passage known in Latin as a *salvo conducto* in the lands of Christendom — instructed an agent of the Sultan to take the captain and hands off the vessel, chained them by the neck, and took them to Cairo escorted by thirty janissaries.

The Jewish trader was shocked by the sight, observing that even a vessel belonging to Andrea Doria, the well-known Genoese seaman, or to "Cicala the plunderer", would not have been treated in such a way. According to his name "Cicala the plunderer" was a pirate of Calabrian origin. His Hebrew nickname (*ha-sholel*) was a homophone for the Turkish *celali* — i.e., an armed rebel[12]. The writer of the letter explains that Ali Numayr's vessel had *not* had an *aman* and thus was detained in Syracuse — and that in any case Venetian vessels from Candia were not pirate ships and could not be subjected to such treatment. He describes the terror of the other Venetian captains who anchored in Alexandria, "all of them standing frozen like corpses, wishing to see themselves and their vessels safely outside the port", and that of the Florentine traders in the city, who planned to relocate to Messina. His fear was that this act of retaliation, which seemed to him to be disproportionate, would destroy trade in Alexandria[13].

When pirates captured an Ottoman vessel carrying goods belonging to Don Yehudah de Segura, one of Selim II's (1566-1574) favourites, the Grand Vizier threatened the Doge of Venice that such violations of their agreement would make it hard for the Ottomans to relate to Venetian subjects within their territory as the Doge would wish[14]. In another case, the Grand Vizier Çerkes Mehmet Paşa demanded that the Doge release Ottoman passengers captured by the Malta Order on a Venetian ship sailing from Istanbul to Cairo. This intervention was based on the Capitulations,

[12] See, Y. Koc, *Osmanlıda Toplumsal Dinamizmden Celali İsyanlarına Giden Yol ya da İki Belgeye*, «Bilig: Journal of Social Sciences of the Turkish World», 35 (2005), pp. 229-244; K. Orbay, *Celâlîs Recorded in the Account Books*, «Rivista degli studi orientali», 78.1-4 (2004), pp. 71-83.
[13] TS Or. 1080 box 5, pp. 6a-6b.
[14] M. Rozen, *Strangers* cit., pp. 136-137.

which held sway during this time of peace between the two countries (1625)[15]. Ransom was not discussed and, as in the former case, reciprocity was the basis of this intercession. Similarly, the siege of Crete was considered a retaliation for the Maltese knights' attack on a convoy of Ottoman vessels in 1644 sailing from Istanbul to Alexandria and carrying pilgrims bound for Mecca. Aboard one of the vessels was Sünbüllü Ağa, the retired *kizlar a□asi* — the black eunuch in charge of Sultan's harem — who intended to spend his retirement in Egypt and was carrying a precious cargo. Also on board were the Qadi of Cairo and a woman whom the captors believed to be the Sultan's favourite, and her small child, whom they thought to be the Sultan's son[16]. The knights killed many of the passengers, including Sünbüllü Ağa, divided the spoils between them, and took three women and 350 men captive. In 1645, the enraged Ottomans set out to invade Crete in retaliation, despite the fact that Venetians were not involved in the incident. It took the Ottomans until 1669 to accomplish the conquest of Crete[17]. Although the Ottomans presented the war on Crete as retaliation for the capture of a particular ship, it would be more accurate to see it as a preventive act that followed a series of attacks by the Order on the Ottoman maritime line between Istanbul and Alexandria, the "Alexandria Caravan", which sailed each year carrying pilgrims to Mecca. Capturing Crete enabled the Ottomans to better monitor the eastern Mediterranean and to curtail the Order's freedom of action in these waters[18].

In the ordinary course of events, when an Ottoman subject was captured, the only ones to seek his ransom were his family, who sought out information regarding his whereabouts, raised the funds to ransom him, and found mediators, agents, and traders who would

[15] A. Pelizza, *Riammessi a respirare l'aria tranquilla* cit., pp. 109.
[16] K.M. Setton, *Venice, Austria and the Turks in the Seventeenth Century*, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia 1991, p. 111. Others maintain that the woman was the former nurse of Mahomet IV and the maid of Sünbüllü Ağa: see V. Mignot, *The History of the Turkish, or Ottoman Empire, from its Foundation in 1300, to the Peace of Belgrade in 1740*, trans. A. Hawkins, R. Thorn, Exeter, 1787, vol. 3, p. 97; J.P. Migne, *Troisième et dernière Encyclopédie théologique*, Jacques-Paul Migne, Paris, 1863, vol. 59, p. 1029; L. Moréri, *Le grand dictionnaire historique ou le mélange curieux de l'histoire sacrée et profane*, Libraires associés, Paris, 1725, p. 718.
[17] For the capture of the vessel and siege of Crete, see K.M. Setton, *Venice, Austria and the Turks* cit., p. 111; M. Greene, *A Shared World* cit., pp. 13-18.
[18] A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp. 297-299, 533-538.

transfer the funds to the captors to effect his release[19]. Following the Cyprus war, an exchange of merchants and their merchandise held by the opposing sides was arranged. This was not the rule but the exception[20]. Only in rare cases in which high-ranking officers were involved did the state intervene, those ransomed being primarily military prisoners of war rather than victims of piracy[21]. Here too, paying a ransom may have been regarded as contrary to the ethos of Ottoman honour, which could not allow the "supreme state that is always victorious" (*devlet-ı Aliyye muzaffer daima*) to suffer such shame. This ethos accords with the attitude — or lack thereof — taken by the Quran in such situations[22].

When looking at the Christian world, we must note firstly that the New Testament, insomuch as it does not deal with war, does not address the issue of ransoming captives. The subject does arise, however, in the writings — and certainly the practice — of the Christian world with regard to Christians captured by others, primarily Muslims. In this respect, Christendom did not differ from either the Muslim or the Jewish world, that is, each religious group regarded the ransom of its members from captivity by other groups as recommended if not commended. The existence of slavery, and the captivity of members of other denominations, were regarded as natural. One exception to this rule was the opinion prevalent from the sixteenth century onward in France that anyone who set foot on its soil could not be enslaved — a principle that included Muslims[23.] Thus theoretically, according to the French mindset, a captive was not necessarily only a Christian in the hands of a Muslim but also a Muslim in the hands of a Christian. The ransom of captives was, of course, a very different matter in French eyes, in line with all other Christian states in Europe.

[19] G. Pálffy, *Ransom Slavery* cit., pp. 55-58; A. Nógrády, *A List of Ransom* cit., pp. 27-34; E. Ginio, *Piracy and Redemption* cit., pp. 143-147; A. Pelizza, *Riammessi a respirare l'aria tranquilla* cit., p. 46; A. Brogini, *Malte, frontière de chrétienté* cit., pp.389-390.

[20] A. Pelizza, *Riammessi a respirare l'aria tranquilla* cit., pp. 92-94, 104-109.

[21] F. Szakály, *The Ransom of Ali Bey of Koppány: The Impact of Capturing Slaves on Trade in Ottoman Hungary*, in G. Dávid, P. Fodor (eds.), *Ransom Slavery Along the Ottoman Borders (Early Fifteenth-Early Eighteenth Centuries)*, Brill, Leiden, 2007, pp. 93-114; Z.J. Újváry, *A Muslim Captive's Vicissitudes in Ottoman Hungary (Mid-Seventeenth Century)*, in *ibid.*, pp. 41-167; J. Varga, *Ransoming Ottoman Slaves from Munich (1688)*, in *ibid.*, pp. 169-181.

[22] See above at the beginning of this chapter.

[23] G. Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs* cit., pp. 10-11.

Up until the twelfth century, no Christian attempt to organize the ransom of captives appears to have been made beyond individual initiatives. At the end of this century, the rise of hostilities between Christians and Muslims, particularly in Spain, created a more urgent need for such activity. This was not a matter of mass exchanges at the end of a period of hostility but of sporadic piratical attacks on settlements. During this period, Spanish border settlements began to set up means for ransoming captives, making use of traders moving between the Christian and Muslim worlds. While the community took this responsibility upon itself, it also expected the captive's family to do all in their power to ransom their relatives[24].

Since such organization did not solve the problems of those who had no means or wherewithal, at the end of the twelfth century the Church took it upon itself to carry some of the burden. Carried on the waves of the inter-religious conflict, it imparted a religious character to this charitable work — which up until that point had been civic in nature. Alfonso I of Catalonia and Aragon imposed the duty of ransoming Christian captives from Muslim captors upon several chivalric orders, the most important of these being the Ordo Beatæ Mariæ Virginis de Redemptione Captivorum — better known by its more expressive Spanish name, Orden Real y Militar de Nuestra Señora de la Merced y la Redención de los Cautivos (1218)[25]. Another order — Ordinis Sanctae Trinitatis et Captivorum (1198) — was founded in the South of France following the Crusaders' defeat at the battle of Hattin (1187). From there, Trinitarian houses spread throughout France, Austria, Aragon, Castile and Portugal. In many places the two orders fought zealously over the right to rescue Christian souls from the claws of their Muslim captors[26].

Innocent III (1200) originally envisioned that the Holy Trinity Order would become an international organization devoted to

[24] J.W. Brodman, *Ransoming Captives in Crusader Spain: The Order of Merced on the Christian-Islamic Frontier*, Library of Iberian Sources online, chapter 1, p. 4: http://libro.uca.edu/rc/rc2.pdf (accessed 12.6. 2014); Id., *Community, Identity, and the Redemption of Captives: Comparative Perspectives Across the Mediterranean*, «Anuario de Estudios Medievales», 36.1 (2006), pp. 243-245: http://libro.uca.edu/rc/captives.htm (accessed 29.1.2014); G. Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs* cit., p. 12.

[25] N. Jaspert, *Gefangenenloskauf in der Krone Aragón und die Anfänge des Mercedarierordens. Institutionelle Diversität, religiöse Kontext, Mediterrane Verflechtungen*, in H. Greiser, N. Priesching (eds.), *Gefangenenloskauf im Mittelmeerraum* cit., pp. 99-122.

[26] D. Hershenzon, *Early Modern Spain* cit., pp. 195-198.

collecting money from the masses of the faithful in the Christian world for the ransoming of Christian captives. This Catholic ideal, which emphasized mercy and charity for their own sake and discouraged "dedicated" contributions for specific captives, was not realized. Taken at face value, both Orders acted on the principle that ransoming members of the religious community taken captive by outsiders was a religious commandment and an act of mercy, rather than a local communal obligation. But while their primary source of income came from the contributions of the faithful, they too — much like the Jewish ransom funds — required those whom they ransomed to repay them[27]. These Orders, which spread across the whole of Western Europe, were of great importance throughout the thirteen and fourteenth centuries in places where contact with the Muslim world continued to be close — i.e., Spain and southern France. In northern and central France, support for ransoming captives was far less enthusiastic[28].

With the rise in power of the Muslim states — primarily the Ottoman Empire and its regencies in North Africa — the number of Christian captives in Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers rose steadily during the sixteenth century[29]. The increasing frequency with which Christian military and seamen were being seized being prompted greater interest in ransom activities among Christian sovereigns and influenced the sources of income on which the Orders relied. In Spain, these were the royal governing councils, which became an important source of contributions. At the same time, their priorities were clear — members of the military, sailors and state servants. On the other hand, money donated by a captive's kin, and sometimes his village, was restricted to his ransom only[30].

The state's involvement notwithstanding, the general impression that emerges from the literature is that the captive's immediate circle was always his best hope. Similarly, the Orders that raised money to release captive soldiers, seamen and state servants as well as simple civilians acted on a regional basis, the natural place to gather contributions for the ransoming of captives being their immediate surroundings.

[27] J.W. Brodman*, Ransoming Captives in Crusader Spain* cit., pp. 2-3, 6-7; Id., *Community* cit., pp. 241-252.
[28] J.W. Brodman, *Community* cit., pp. 248-252.
[29] See for example D. Hershenzon, *Early Modern Spain* cit., pp. 87-100.
[30] *Ibid*., pp. 198-199.

Despite the declaration of solidarity expressed in the commitment to ransom captives from Valencia captured by Algerian corsairs in the first half of the sixteenth century, such activity remained primarily confined to individual efforts, only slowly extending to the municipal realm and finally reaching the state and Church[31].

In the latter half of the sixteenth century, various Italian states established municipal authorities and organizations whose role was to collect money for ransoming captives: Napoli in 1548, Venice in 1586, Genoa in 1597, and so forth[32]. Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585) commanded the Gonfaloniere fraternity of Rome to take responsibility for ransoming Christian captives from the papal states who fell into Muslim hands[33]. The work of these fraternities was based on public contributions from anywhere and everywhere possible and was oriented towards local inhabitants. The only place in which the ransom of captives was arranged by the state and paid for by mandatory taxation imposed on the populace was Sicily — itself a pirate departure port and important slave-trading

[31] J.F. Pardo Molero, *Mercaderes, frailes, corsarios y cautivos: Intercambios entre el reino de Valencia y el norte de Africa en la primera mitad del siglo XVI*, in W. Kaiser (ed.), Wolfgang Kaiser, ed., *Le commerce des captifs: Les intermédiaires dans l'échange et le rachat des prisonniers en Méditerraneé, XVe-XVIIIe siècle*, École française de Rome, Rome, 2008, pp. 165-192; D. Hershenzon, *Early Modern Spain* cit., p. 162.
[32] See R.C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast and Italy, 1500-1800*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2003, p. 11; M. Lenci, *Riscatti di schiavi cristiani dal Maghreb: La compagnia della SS. Pietà di Lucca (secoli XVII-XVIII)*, «Società e Storia», 31 (1986), pp. 53-79. For Napoli, see G. Bonaffini, *La Sicilia e i Barbareschi. Incursioni corsare e riscatto degli schiavi, 1570-1606*, ILA Palma, Palermo, 1983; G. Boccadamo, *La Redenzione dei Cattivi a Napoli nel Cinquecento. Lo Statuto di una Confraternita*, D'Auria, Naples, 1985; Ead., *Napoli e l'Islam. Storie di musulmani, schiavi e rinnegati in età moderna*, D'Auria, Naples, 2010. For Venice, see A. Pelizza*, Schiavi e riscatti: alcuni cenni al caso veneziano nel contesto europeo d'età moderna*, in M.P. Casalena (ed.), *Loughi d 'Europa. Spazio, genere, memoria*, Archetipo Libri, Bologna, 2011, pp. 22-34: http://www.storicamente.org/quadstor1/quadstor1_080711.pdf (accessed 2.2.2014); A. Pelizza, *Riammessi a respirare l'aria tranquilla* cit., pp. 55-77.
[33] S. Bono, *L'Arciconfraternita del Gonfalone di Roma e il riscatto degli schiavi dai musulmani, «*Capitoliu»*,* 32 (1957), pp. 20-24; L. Ruggeri, *L'archiconfraternita del Gonfalone: Memorie*, Bernardo Morini, Rome, 1866; R. Benedetti, *Madri, figlie, mogli, schiave. Le istanze di liberazione inoltrate, all'Arciconfraternita del Gonfalone (Secolo XVIII)*, «Storia delle donne», 5 (2009), pp. 147-165; N. Priesching, *Von Menschenfängern und Menschenfischern: Sklaverei und Loskauf im Kirchenstaat des 16. - 18. Jahrhunderts*. Olms Verlag, Hildesheim-Zürich-New York, 2012; Id., *Seelenheil und Prestige. Die Erzbruderschaft der Gonfalone als Loskauf-organisation für den Kirchenstaat,* in H. Grieser, N. Friesching (eds.), *Gefangenenloskauf im Mittelmeerraum* cit., pp. 191-212.

centre[34]. Second to Sicily in its organization of ransoms was the Republic of Venice, which regarded it as a state business though it did not tax the population to finance this undertaking. The Orders as well as the other ransom societies and initiatives often had to resort to dealing with local intermediaries in Muslim countries who specialized in ransom and had access to the slave owners. For example, the Republic of Venice used the services of Daniel Rodriga in the Adriatic sea[35], David Cohen in Algiers[36], and Mosheh Israel and David Navarra in Tunis[37].

In spite of the fact that Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, and in Portugal were forced to convert in 1497, all the ransom agencies, including those that dealt with Spanish and Portuguese captives in the North African pirate regencies, used the services of Jewish businessmen who were born in Spain or Portugal. At the same time, many captives, and their families, preferred to approach such "specialists" in the first place. Ransom through Orders was considered safer than dealing with private agents in Muslim lands; however, the first such transaction took a much longer time than the second, and in any case, ordinary people who had no proof that the voyage on which they were captured involved some service to the state — any Christian state — knew that they were last in line for redemption as far as such institutions were concerned[38].

In contrast to the Italian states, France was the Sublime Porte's traditional ally and thus allegedly had nothing to fear from corsairs. Up until the beginning of the seventeenth century, the three North-African regencies still displayed a certain measure of submission to the Sublime Porte[39], the latter for its part endeavouring to temper their penchant for attacking French vessels. During this period, most Christian ransom activity in France was conducted by private individuals, every seaman and trader having family, business colleagues, and a community dedicated to ensuring his safety. As the captive's family was generally the first to look for his safe

[34] R.C. Davis, *Christian Slaves* cit., p. 153.
[35] A. Pelizza, *Riammessi a respirare l'aria tranquilla* cit., pp. 133-134
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 258.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 135, note 159, pp. 136-141, 152.
[38] D. Hershenzon, *Early Modern Spain* cit., pp. 148-162, 210-212. See also above note 227.
[39] On the decline of the Ottoman authority among the Barbary states see D. Hershenzon, *Early Modern Spain* cit., pp. 216-218.

return, the principal burden of ransoming fell on its members[40]. At this point, however, the Muslim corsairs were capturing roughly seventy to eighty French trading vessels a year. Apart from the heavy damages to trade, worrisome reports were reaching France regarding the forced conversion to Islam of youths sailing on these vessels, and atrocities committed upon them.

The French attitude towards ransoming captives took several forms. Marseille — the "gateway to the Levant" — like other cities along the southern coast of France, regarded the activity of the corsairs as constituting a serious threat to its trade, businesses, and livelihoods. In the final decade of the sixteenth century, the French "nation" in Tunis also imposed a 1% tax on all goods traded by its members in order to ransom the dozens of captives held in the city. As a state, France's concern during this period lay principally with the grave danger of the conversion of captives and what it considered to be acts of barbarism committed against them. But while in theory the state recognized the need and reasons for ransoming captives, in practice the only assistance it extended was in the political and diplomatic realms, first and foremost in the form of a royal permit to deliver goods and money to North Africa[41]. When the families had exhausted all financial means, they turned to the Orders who held a monopoly over the ransom of captives and raised funds for their release. The lower the person's social status, the less the social and institutional circles around him were inclined to provide aid[42]. The reason for this lay in the fact that the religious Orders and the hometowns of the captives both demanded repayment of the ransom when the captive was returned[43]. Once the money had been collected, the business passed over to the mediators — the Marseille consuls in Tunis, Algiers, and Tripoli — who acted as important figures in brokering deals on behalf of the city's citizens, and at most, some Provençals as well[44]. European traders

[40] G. Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs* cit., pp. 31-33; W. Kaiser, *Les hommes de crédit dans les rachats de captifs provençaux (XVIe-XVIIe siècles)*, in Id. (ed.), *Commerce des captifs: Les intermédiaires dans l'échange et le rachat des prisonniers en Méditerraneé*, XVe-XVIIIe siècle: http://store.torrossa.it/pages/ipplatform/itemDetails.faces (accessed 18.9.2015), p. 316.
[41] W. Kaiser, *Les hommes de crédit* cit., p. 295.
[42] G. Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs* cit., p. 58.
[43] W. Kaiser, *Les hommes de crédit* cit:, pp. 316-318.
[44] G. Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs* cit., pp. 7-51.

living in Tunis and Algiers who were familiar with local ways also served as mediators, with the Jewish traders from Livorno playing a significant role in this business in the seventeenth century[45].

From 1661 — the year that Louis XIV took power in practice, the French attitude to relations with the North African pirate regencies began to change. With international trade becoming a key issue in France's economic policy, piracy became much less welcome; further, attacks on French vessels and the captivity of Frenchmen under humiliating conditions did not sit well with the Sun King's view of his rule and his country's role. Although Louis XIV bombarded Algiers and signed an agreement for the normalization of relations with the pirate nations, he showed little enthusiasm for investing money in ransoming captives. The city of Marseille, which set aside money for this purpose, also focused on ransoming its own natives rather than those who had settled within its walls. Over time, the disparity between Louis XIV's self-image (or that of his rule) and the capture of his subjects drew the king increasingly into ransom efforts. From the 1690s onwards, it had thus become a state affair — although, as might be expected, not an altogether altruistic one. Although the ransomed were first and foremost native Frenchmen, religious deviants were sifted out, on the one hand, while those who exhibited the potential to benefit the nation (even if not born in France), were favored, on the other[46]. The ransoming of captives thus became a bargaining chip for loyalty to the king and a device for acquiring useful citizens.

Having studied the mechanisms of the redemption of European captives in North Africa, Wolfgang Kaiser suggests that the entry of the religious Orders and dedicated societies into the business of ransoming captives — particularly in France and Italy — encouraged and fostered the pirate economy precisely because they were based on the organized ransom of captives[47]. Close observation of the rise in pirate activity and the institutionalization of the ransom of captives, especially in France and Britain, however, reveals that it was precisely the latter practice that led these states to the conclusion that only violent action could put a stop to the capture of their subjects. Critics of the Mercedarian and Trinitarian Orders'

[45] W. Kaiser, *Les hommes de crédit* cit., p. 297.
[46] G. Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs* cit., pp. 52-91.
[47] W. Kaiser, *Les hommes de crédit* cit., pp. 311-312, 315.

activities on behalf of Spanish captives also cited the economic inefficiency of the redemption enterprise and recommended "preventive redemption", that is, investment in naval forces, and naval warfare against the pirate regencies[48].

The French were not the only ones to fall into the hands of North African corsairs, with many British seamen and traders also being held in Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis. According to a Moroccan source, 25,000 British captives laboured in building the city of Meknes at the end of the seventeenth century[49]. Britain responded to attacks against its vessels by attacking Algerian ships and bombarding the ports of Tunis, Algiers, and Tripoli. Like the French, they also signed agreements with the North African regencies. But despite appointing consuls to protect their subjects, they continued to be the target of pirate activity[50].

Redemption efforts in the British Isles bore a different nature than those conducted in France or the papal states. Whereas until 1642 some of the families of British captives appealed to the Holy Trinity Order, most were aided by parochial networks[51]. The wives of captured seamen formed a very vocal group who threatened conventional social norms by calling for the release of their husbands[52]. A complex banking mediation system like that in Malta dealing with Jewish captives facilitated the transfer of money from the collectors in Britain to the captors[53]. Relatives in Britain also pleaded before their rulers, despite receiving very little response[54].

According to Viktus and Matar, the generosity of the Spanish and French kings is brought into sharp relief by the stinginess of the kings of England, the difference in attitude between the two stemming from the fact that the former regarded the captives as soldiers of Christ in the war against Islam while the British viewed them as the victims of business and trading ventures for whose fate the crown was not responsible[55]. In my opinion, this portrays the French and Spanish kings in an exaggeratedly favourable light and devalues the British. Between 1629 and 1645, hundreds of Eng-

[48] D. Hershenzon, *Early Modern Spain* cit., pp. 205-208.
[49] D.J. Vitkus, N.I. Matar (eds.), *Piracy* cit., pp. 4-5.
[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 12-25; C.R. Pennel, *Piracy and Diplomacy* cit., pp. 18-20, 41.
[51] D.J. Vitkus, N.I. Matar (eds.), *Piracy* cit., pp. 24-45.
[52] N.I. Matar, *Britain and Barbary* cit., pp. 76-92.
[53] D.J. Vitkus, N.I. Matar (eds.), *Piracy* cit., p. 27.
[54] N.I. Matar, *Britain and Barbary* cit., pp. 48-52, 55-58.
[55] D.J. Vitkus, N.I. Matar (eds.), *Piracy* cit., p. 29.

lish vessels were captured by corsairs, with an estimated 4,000-5,000 Englishmen being held in North Africa. The fierce public debate that continued throughout 1641 over the way in which the issue should be handled led to the introduction a year later of the "Algiers tax", which levied 1% on all trade imported into and exported from the country, a much smaller sum being imposed on the rural population. A large part of the tax was dedicated to strengthening the British fleet and to the war against the pirates, with the result that British trading vessels gradually ceased to be attractive targets to the corsairs. By 1650, all the English captives in North Africa had been ransomed[56].

The attitude of the Quakers towards the ransom of their brethren is a particularly intriguing subject. Regarded as a heretical sect outside the New World, like the Jews they knew that their neighbours and rulers would not ransom them and that they could only rely on their own community for assistance. They thus collected great sums across the globe — from Ireland to Barbados and Jamaica — in order to ransom any of their brethren captured in North Africa[57]. It is difficult to avoid the similarities between their views regarding the ransoming of captives and the declarative principle — at the very least — held by Jewish society and culture.

In recent years, numerous studies have been devoted to the subject of captives from the northern countries (The Low Countries, Denmark, and the Hanseatic cities) seized in the Mediterranean. This research — in particular the comparison of its findings with those regarding the ransom of captives in Catholic nations and the Jewish communities — raises interesting issues. The northern peoples first appeared in the Mediterranean following the Dutch revolt in 1590[58]. As maritime traders, the Dutch had a great interest in developing and protecting their commerce. The capitulations they obtained from the Ottomans in 1612 explicitly stipulated that any Dutchman captured by corsairs from Algiers would be released with his property, and that if hostilities broke out between Dutch and corsair vessels due to the latter's refusal to comply with the agreement, the affair would not damage relations between the

[56] N.I. Matar, *Britain and Barbary* cit., pp. 9, 65-75; M. Ressel, C. Zwierlein, *The Ransoming of North European Captives* cit., pp. 396-400.

[57] D.J. Vitkus, N.I. Matar (eds.), *Piracy* cit., pp. 29-30.

[58] W. Brulez, G. Devos, *Marchands flamands à Venise: 1606-1621*, Institut historique belge de Rome, Rome, 1986, p. xvi.

Sublime Porte and The Low Countries. The Dutch consul in Istanbul sent consuls to Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers to supervise the implementation of the agreement[59].

In practice, this gave the Dutch a free hand to operate against the Ottoman regencies in North Africa if they did not comply with the capitulations accorded to The Low Countries. At the same time, the Dutch won for their ships the right to anchor and equip themselves in Ottoman ports in cases involving hostilities with states without capitulations from the Ottoman Empire who thus did not have diplomatic relations with the Empire[60]. While they preferred to come to agreements with pirate nations rather than confront them, they were willing to attack Tuscan, Neapolitan, and even Venetian vessels[61]. Nor did the agreements avert conflict with the North African principalities, the Dutch sending war ships to the Mediterranean in 1618 against Algerian pirates, in collaboration with their sworn enemy, the Spaniards, with whom a ceasefire was then in force. The war with Algiers continued until 1621, but the peace with Spain did not last, and the Dutch soon renewed their shared interest with Spain's Muslim enemies[62]. In 1621, the number of Dutch captives in Algiers was estimated at the fantastical figure of 32,000[63].

The ambivalent relationship between Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers, and The Low Countries continued through the seventeenth century, with Dutch war ships increasingly plying the Mediterranean and the state realizing that it had to ransom seamen and traders captured from time to time and not released in accordance with the various agreements[64]. In line with its political, diplomatic, and military policy, however, the Dutch government showed little largesse in ransoming its seamen or traders. In 1618, it prohibited its consul in Algiers from using state money for the ransom of captives. This policy continued for another century. When Holland — the most important Dutch province of The Low Countries — sought to establish a "slave fund" like that of the Hanseatic cities (see below), the Zeeland province objected on the grounds that such a poli-

[59] A.H. De Groot, *Ottoman North Africa* cit., pp. 131-147.

[60] D. Quataert, H. Inalcik (eds.), *An Economic and Social History* cit., p. 375.

[61] D. Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs* cit., p. 35; A.H. de Groot, *Ottoman North Africa* cit., pp. 127, 300-301 n. 20, 326 n. 30.

[62] *Ibid.*, pp. 135-136.

[63] V.W. Lunsford, *Piracy and Privateering in the Golden Age Netherlands*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005, p. 80.

[64] *Ibid.*, pp. 83-85.

cy would encourage the corsairs to capture Dutch vessels, drive ransom fees up, and cause North African rulers to lose interest in making agreements with the Low Countries. As a result, captives would be automatically ransomed and seamen would become unwilling to fight when attacked by corsairs[65].

Like the Catholic states, the Dutch encouraged the establishment of societies dedicated to collecting money for the ransom of captives, such organizations being set up in virtually every port city. Here too, family members, relatives, and friends were the primary actors[66]. The mediators were Spanish and Portuguese Jews living in the Low Countries and various parts of North Africa, and the mechanisms for transferring money resembled those in Venice and Malta. In the majority of cases, the credit extended carried a 30% rate of interest[67].

The Hanseatic cities and the kingdom of Denmark took a different tack than the Catholic states — and the Low Countries — with respect to the ransoming of captives. Instead of limiting themselves to nominating officials and creating organizations, or encouraging the establishment of institutions, they actively dealt with the issue as towns and states. The majority of the captives from the north European countries were seamen on vessels flying the flags of other countries, and their number was far fewer than those of other nations. Until the end of the sixteenth century, captives from the Hanseatic cities were ransomed with sums collected by their family and friends. After the renewal of hostilities between Spain and the Low Countries in 1621, the North African corsairs greatly escalated their activities, with the large number of German seamen taken captive leading captains and officers from Hamburg to establish a society for ransoming their colleagues. Run on a voluntary basis, it was limited to officers and captains, and ordinary seamen had no recourse to its funds[68]. Now the state also became involved. In 1624, after

[65] M. Ressel, *The North European Way of Ransoming: Explorations into an Unknown Dimension of the Early Modern Welfare State*, «Historical Social Research» 35.4 (2010), *The Production of Human Security in Premodern and Contemporary History*, pp. 136-138, 2014 :http://www.jstor.org/stable/25758861 (accessed: 21.7.2012).

[66] M. Ressel, *The North European Way of Ransoming* cit., p. 137; V.W. Lunsford, *Piracy and Privateering* cit., pp. 84-85.

[67] H.Z. Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa* cit., vol. 2, pp. 15-18; A.H. de Groot, *Ottoman North Africa* cit., p. 140.

[68] M. Ressel, *The Ransoming of North European Captives* cit., p. 129.

a discussion between the seamen's guild in Hamburg and the city council, the town set up a mandatory insurance institution known as the Hamburger Sklavenkasse — the Hamburg Slaves Fund. Run by the city's admiralty, it was charged with collecting a fixed sum from each seaman and vessel owner whose ships sailed west of The Low Countries, the proceeds being devoted to ransoming seamen and captains taken captive in North Africa. The city thereby sent a clear message that it stood behind all its sailors and ship owners and would ransom them immediately if captured.

In 1627, the city of Lübeck followed suit, as the increase in maritime trade by the two cities during the Thirty Years War multiplied the number of captives. When the funds proved unable to meet the "demand", both institutions revised their constitutions — Lübeck in 1629 and Hamburg in 1641 — obligating vessel owners to deposit large sums of money in the fund in addition to the earlier levies, in direct proportion to the volume of their cargos. The nearer the vessel's destination was to North Africa, the higher the deposit. The funds also raised money from public contributions[69].

Between 1624 and 1634, the two cities used the services of Bernard van den Broecke's firm in Livorno for ransoming captives held in North Africa. Initially, they also employed the services of a trader by the name of Francis van Iperseel, whose vessels sailed from Livorno to Algiers, to transfer the ransom monies in cash. After two of his vessels were sunk, however, together with the money they were carrying, they gave all their business to van den Broecke. Through his mediation they could send the money in the form of bills of exchange, which included insurance against theft or sinking. Like the Jewish traders, van den Broecke took 30% on every negotiation. When his firm went bankrupt in 1634, the Hanseatic cities employed the services of the Dutch consuls resident in North Africa[70].

The Kingdom of Denmark played a far smaller role in the Mediterranean than did the Hanseatic cities. Up until the last decade of the seventeenth century, it exhibited no interest in mercantile affairs whatsoever, its shipbuilding industry being very small in comparison with those of Hamburg and Lübeck. On occasion, though, Danish seamen sailing on foreign ships were captured in

[69] *Ibid*., pp. 129-131.

[70] M. Ressel, *Venice* cit.

North Africa. After several hundred Icelandic seamen were captured in North Africa, and Denmark was unable to ransom them, an organization of captains known as the Skipperlav was established in Copenhagen in 1634. With its state-like role and ample power, it closely resembled the Hamburger and Lübeck institutions in many respects. Membership was restricted to officers and owners of trading vessels. Despite the fact that only its members were required to pay the ransom tax, the funds were used to ransom all Danish seamen. The institution also helped seamen who had fallen ill or been injured. Since the number of Danish sailors taken captive was small, the Danes did not need the amounts of money the Hanseatic cities required.

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the Danes also began to engage in international trading ventures, resulting in greater numbers of their seamen falling into pirates' hands. The basis of the ransom fund was consequently broadened, with ordinary seamen henceforth also obligated to pay the tax; but since they were not accepted as members, they only had to pay half the amount of the officers. From 1685, non-Copenhagen seamen were also compelled to pay the tax to the society if their vessels sailed from the city. The Danish guild thus took upon itself the responsibility of ransoming all Danish seamen while obligating them to insure themselves through the captains' society.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, several Norwegian vessels from Bergen and Drammen were captured in close succession by Algerian pirates, raising the number of Danish captives to several dozen. The funds collected in Bergen and throughout the kingdom were insufficient to ransom them all and the captains' society in Copenhagen refused to share the load. The Danish king, Frederick IV (1671-1730) therefore stepped in and ordered that a Sklavenkasse along the lines of that in Lübeck and Hamburg be set up. Headed by the Bishop of Zeeland and two traders from the capital, it demanded that the captains' society hand over all the monies in their fund and created a ransom network from Copenhagen through Hamburg and Amsterdam to the German trader in Venice who was its liaison in the Mediterranean within a matter of weeks. The tax it imposed on ordinary seamen throughout the

kingdom was much less than that paid by the captains — and even the ordinary seamen — in the Hanseatic cities, with the deficit made up by twice-yearly collections[71].

According to Magnus Ressel's study of the ransom methods of the northern European nations, the number of captives from Denmark and the Hanseatic cities between 1590 and 1830 was estimated at between 5,000 and 8,000 compared with 6,000-7,000 Dutch captives. The captives from the Hanseatic cities spent less than a year in captivity, with 80%-90% of them being ransomed. Their Dutch counterparts, by comparison, spent between one and three years in captivity, only 33%-50% being ransomed[72].

[71] *Ibid.*, pp. 129-136.
[72] *Ibid.*, p. 139.

VIII
THE RANSOMING OF CAPTIVES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: A COMPARATIVE VIEW

At least two recent attempts have been made to examine the issue of the ransoming of captives in the Mediterranean from a comparative perspective[1]. Both deal primarily with northern Europe, however, paying little attention to the Mediterranean states themselves or to Muslims and Jews. The present survey allows us to offer a broader and more comprehensive portrait.

Making use of Protestant Christian sociological research, Magnus Ressel concludes that the disparity in attitudes between the Hanseatic cities and Denmark, on the one hand, and the Dutch, on the other, over the ransoming of their sailors and traders stemmed from the fact that the former were Lutheran and the latter Calvinist. While Lutheranism perceived the state as "an embodiment of *mutual insurance of a given group*, and thereby as an active producer of human security", the Calvinist state "preferred the *production of security for the economy of its system*, not for individuals"[2]. In a second study coauthored with Cornel Zwierlein, Ressel expanded both the geographic scope and the possible causes for the difference in attitudes among various states when it came to ransoming their subjects and citizens.

Geographically speaking, the two scholars extended their comparison from the Hanseatic cities, Denmark, and the Low Countries to Britain and, to a lesser extent, the Italian states. With respect to the motives for ransoming, they pointed to the rate of development

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[1] M. Ressel, *The North European Way of Ransoming* cit., pp. 138-145; M. Ressel, C. Zwierlein, *The Ransoming of North European Captives* cit., pp. 400-406.

[2] M. Ressel, *The North European Way of Ransoming* cit., p. 145.

of naval power of the Atlantic nations. Without retracting Ressel's earlier conclusions, they suggested that nations with large merchant and naval fleets — which Britain became in the seventeenth century — could not afford to allow their vessels and sailors to be repeatedly exposed to harm but had to react forcefully. Taking care of their subjects thus meant freeing them by violent means[3]. The Low Countries, by contrast, as a republic of provinces with a loose central government, were less effective in wielding force[4].

While Ressel and Zwierlein's survey does not include France, the same principle applies to that country. By the last third of the seventeenth century, France was no longer prepared to suffer any more damage to its trade or subjects. While not imposing a tax to fund the ransom of captives, France used both diplomatic channels and violent means to achieve this goal[5].

With respect to the Italian states, the two scholars note the close ties with the Church that marked all the ransom institutions established there, and the fact that all the efforts undertaken were reactive rather than proactive. This was as distinct from the Hanseatic cities, Denmark, and Britain after 1642, whose ransom enterprises bore the character of mutual insurance between citizens — or at least those involved in the maritime trade. In other words, funds were collected prior to the capture of seamen or vessels, principally in the form of a mandatory tax. All the monies raised in Italy, by contrast — with the exception of Sicily — were collected after the captives had fallen into the pirates' hands[6].

Several further aspects can be added to these conclusions, in my opinion. The first is the religious factor: Why did France — in particular under Louis XIV and beyond — with its unique centralized government — not impose taxes to raise funds for the redemption of its subjects held captive in North Africa? In my view, the answer to this question lies not only in its self-perception as a major maritime power but also in the Catholic concept of charity and compassion. In Catholic eyes, ransoming captives constituted an "act of mercy" — a commandment whose performance guaranteed a reward. Imposing a tax to finance such activity would have prevented the faithful from

[3] M. Ressel, C. Zwierlein, *The Ransoming of North European Captives* cit., p. 394.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 392.
[5] See above, Chapter Seven.
[6] M. Ressel, C. Zwierlein, *The Ransoming of North European Captives* cit., pp. 388-389.

winning such a crown. This attitude was shared by France, Spain, and the Italian states, also forming the basis of the Church's control over the ransom activities undertaken in those countries.

But neither religious allegiance nor maritime power suffices to provide a metaview of the Mediterranean basin, including the foreign actors that sailed its seas. When discussing the religious aspect as a restraining factor in the states' ransom activities, we must ask why some Muslim nations ransomed captives and others did not. Was ransoming captives regarded as an act of mercy guaranteeing a celestial reward, and therefore not undertaken as state policy? If so, why did some Muslim states nevertheless take it upon themselves to act on behalf of their subjects? We must also ask what lay behind the different attitudes exhibited by the various Jewish communities on this issue, and whether any common denominator can be deduced, while examining the features that distinguish Jewish ransom activities from those of other nations.

It is important to remember that every captive — man, woman, or child — was the son or daughter of parents, a spouse, or parent to children who were left not knowing what would happen to their loved ones if they could not come to their aid. This being the most important and strongest motive for ransoming all captives, it held true across religious divides. Whether Muslim, Jewish, or Christian, family members were always the ones who worked most intensively — and in general, most effectively — on behalf of those being held captive. In a ripple effect, next came their relatives, friends, work colleagues, and community. Far away, over the sea, was the state — and at a still more distant remove, those who belonged to the same religion. This situation is true of all the religious communities, any cases not falling into this category requiring explanation on the basis of the specific circumstances.

The Catholic Church and Muslim world form the largest entities to be taken into consideration when examining this subject. Since the Church wished all the captive faithful to be released, it set no conditions for their ransom — either economic or social status — ensuring that the money was raised from voluntary contributions and given anonymously to no designated captive so that the mercy would be real rather than motivated by worldly reward or gratitude. Neither social status nor the captive's ability to raise

money for his release were relevant, all those taken captive possessing equal merit. The Church thus established religious-military Orders to take responsibility for ransoming captives.

If we look closely at all the Catholic states, however, and in places where the Orders operated, it is immediately apparent that the locations in which funds were raised on behalf of specific captives were always their home cities and districts. Even the authorities appointed by city-states such as Genoa and Venice focused their efforts first and foremost on captives from their own communities. While others were occasionally ransomed, these were the exception to the rule. In contrast to the city-state, the state always lies at a far remove. Although kings and rulers sometimes gave private contributions, these were earmarked for the ransom of military and state servants. Moreover, they clearly preferred preventative action against piracy over the ransoming of captives, or diplomatic negotiations based on the existence of bilateral agreements between themselves and their counterparts.

While Catholicism and Islam both regarded ransoming as an act of mercy, in the Muslim states across history the ransoming of captives was generally the task of the captive's family. This is particularly striking in the Ottoman period. An analysis of British policy yields a similar picture. The captive's immediate circle — family, friends, community — were those who sought his ransom. The "Algiers tax" was established not only to put an end to British subjects being held captive in North Africa but also, and more importantly, to stop the attacks of North African pirates on British vessels. The Low Countries were perhaps the only state with a clear ideology behind their decision not to engage in the ransoming of captives — meaning that, at least until the eighteenth century, their captives could only place their trust in their families and immediate circles.

While the Hanseatic cities and Denmark appear to be prominent exceptions in this respect, it must be remembered that Hamburg and Lübeck were port cities, all of their seamen thus constituting a circle of friends intimately acquainted with one another. Both cities were heavily dependent on maritime trade, yet the numbers taken captive in the Mediterranean were small. In Denmark, the captains' society was confined to Copenhagen, this too being a small community in which everyone knew one another. When the society was called upon to ransom captives from Bergen, it declined to do so. The only true exception to this rule was the Danish king's decision to take the matter out of the hands of the ransom society and turn the safety of the kingdom's sailors into a state affair. While the argument that Lutheranism played a part in the policy adopted by Denmark is plausible, the Danes, like Britain, succeeded in obtaining diplomatic agreements with Algiers and Morocco in the mid-eighteenth century, thereby bringing piracy against its vessels to an end[7].

An overview of the Jewish communities scattered across the Mediterranean, and their branches in Western Europe, reveals a more complex picture of the motives for ransoming captives. While Jews (like Muslims and Catholics) clearly regarded the redemption of captives as a religious commandment to be performed irrespective of community, class, or status, they were also aware, as a minority without military or political power, that they had to ransom all of their brethren who fell into foreign hands in order to survive. Beyond these considerations, the central institution for ransoming captives in the seventeenth century — the Venetian society and its main branches in Livorno and Amsterdam — bore a certain resemblance to the Hamburg, Lübeck, and Copenhagen Sklavenkassen, in regard to both its insurance aspect and its preference for its own members and inner circles over other captives. This favouritism reflects the same "family first" principle noted above.

The Quakers were undoubtedly the smallest group to engage in ransoming captives, and also the only one to raise funds around the globe to ransom any Quaker whoever he or she might be.

Significantly, the greater the size of the body from whom a captive sought help, and the more secular its nature, the less were the chances of being ransomed. Strong nations with large fleets preferred military confrontation rather than diplomatic compromise to gain the release of captives. As long as the Maltese knights' principal dealings were with local individuals and associations, they could earn a good income from piracy. The moment they had to confront states and armies, however, piracy could no longer sustain them. Ransoming and piracy alike were first and foremost businesses — guaranteeing the livelihood of large numbers of people.

In her book *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, Lynn Hunt speaks of an "imagined empathy" created by the novel forms of literature and art that developed in Western Europe in the eight-

[7] M. Ressel, *The North European Way of Ransoming* cit., pp. 134-135. The Danish Sklavenkasse existed between 1712 and 1757.

eenth century. This idea rests on Benedict Anderson's concept of the "imagined community" — the nation as a public composed of individuals who do not know one another by face or name but envision the existence of a common origin and fate[8]. According to Hunt, it was not the rationalism of the end of the eighteenth century that first led to the idea of human rights but rather the attention given to the emotional component of the human condition, which led people to examine their inner selves. Imagined empathy is thus the ability to feel the distress of people thousands of miles away whom one has never seen and will never set eyes on. These people resemble us, making it possible to recognize that they have the same rights as we do[9].

While it may be argued that since the present study relates primarily to the seventeenth century, Hunt's work is of no relevance here, I would suggest that all the activities undertaken by the Catholic Orders, community organizations, cities, and professional guilds — and certainly states — on behalf of their captives, in the seventeenth century and earlier, appear to have been based on some form of "imagined empathy". The larger the entity, the more illusory — and less effective — its empathy. This was true even before the Enlightenment and still holds true today. The United States does not negotiate the ransom of its citizens[10], but it does negotiate the ransom of captive soldiers[11]. The redemption of captives is an active issue in modern Israeli society, as it has been throughout Jewish history[12]. The actions the State of Israel takes today to free captives — citizens of the country, and Jews who are not citizens; soldiers as well as civilians — appear to be guided

[8] L. Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, Norton and Co., New York, 2007; B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1991.

[9] L. Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* cit., pp. 1-34.

[10] See for example Assuring the Freedom of Americans on the High Seas: The United States Response to Piracy, Testimony, Kurt Amend, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Statement before the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's Subcommittee on Coat Guard and Maritime Transportation, Washington, DC, March 15, 2011. http://go.usa.gov/QPX3 (accessed 11.8.2014).

[11] For just one example, see K. Eichenwald, *The Truth Behind Bowe Bergdahl, POW, Prisoner Swap*, «Newsweek», 19 June 2014: www.newsweek.com/truth-behind-bowe-bergdahl-pow-prisoner-swap- 253218 (accessed 11.8.2014).

[12] R. Bergman, *By Any Means Necessary: Israel's Covert War for its POWs and MIAs*, Or Yehuda, Kinneret Zmora Bitan, 2009.

to a significant extent by this ethos, which is deeply ingrained in the culture of every Jew[13]. It is sufficient to recall in this context the case of Gilad Shalit[14]. On the other hand, the opposite has also occurred: the state has failed to intervene when from an ethical standpoint it should have — as in the case of the captives in the Lavon affair who rotted in an Egyptian gaol from 1954 to the end of the Six Day War[15]. This episode teaches us that while the ethos of "imagined empathy" may be indelibly stamped on Jewish culture, it does not apply equally to everyone in every place, and that the religio-ethical commandment is not necessarily the sole consideration operating in this context. While the State of Israel asserts that "it will do everything", "everything" is in fact directly proportional to the pressure exerted by the family and inversely proportional to the political damage the decision makers are likely to suffer as a result. In general, the size of a state continues to play an important role in its decision on whether to negotiate or engage in confrontation. The physical distance between the families of the captives and the interested governments also remains a key factor. Ultimately, now as then, the captive's greatest assets are his nearest and dearest.

[13] D. Gavriely, *Israel's Cultural Code of Captivity and the Personal Stories of Yom Kippur War Ex-POWs*, «Armed Forces & Society», 33.1 (2006), pp. 94-105.

[14] R. Bergman, *Gilad Shalit and the Rising Price of an Israeli Life*, «New York Times», 9 November 2011: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/13/magazine/gilad-shalit-and-the-cost-of-an-israeli-life.html?_r-0 (accessed 20.8.2013).

[15] E. Kafkafi, *Mosheh Sharett and the Lavon Affair: A Tale of Belated Recognition*, «Zionism», 23 (2001), pp. 331-352; A. Harel, *55 shanah aharei, amn modeh bifney qetzinav: nikhshalnu be-farashat "'eseq ha-bish" be-mitzrayim* [55 Years Later: Army Intelligence Admits to Its Officers: We Failed in the Lavon Affair in Egypt], «Haaretz», 11 November 2009. http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.1289560 (accessed 20.8.2013).

Legend of symbols in the Hebrew text:

// = beginning of a new manuscript page
[ ] = expansion of an abbreviation in the manuscript
[…] = illegible section
< > = superscript
( ) = editor’s addition

APPENDIX

Epistles on behalf of Jewish Captives from Jerusalem Manuscript 8°61

The letters have been transcribed into Hebrew with precision. Punctuation has been added to facilitate reading. Where we added diacritic vocalizations to biblical verses cited in the letters, we used the Hebrew Bible’s defective spelling instead of the unvocalized plene spelling. Additional symbols used in the text, including (') to signify abbreviations and (") to indicate an allusion or wordplay, have been left in place and explained.

In the apparatus of the English translation, translations of complete biblical verses are followed by an abbreviation of the translation. Thus, “NIV” refers to the New International Version, ESV to the English Standard Version, and AKJV to the American King James Version. Translations were selected based on the version that best approximates the sense in which the verse appears in the letters. Citations from classical rabbinic corpora contain a reference to the relevant tractate prefaced by a single letter that indicates the corpus (b = Babylonian Talmud; m = Mishnah; t = Tosefta; y = Jerusalem [Palestinian] Talmud). Thus, tSotah refers to tractate Sotah as it appears in the Tosefta corpus.

Document I

איגרת מס. 54, עמ' 98:
(נשבה על ידי שודדים במקום לא ידוע)

קול שועת, צעקת, נאקת, אנקת מפני עקת העני הלזה דל ורזה מוביל כתבא דנא עלו באזננו, ונשמע וימס לבבנו,[1] תשש כחינו ושיחנו,[2] אשר ראינו צרת נפשו בהתחננו אלינו, מרב רבבות התלאות שואות ומשואות, בעברת ה' צבאות,[3] שבר על שבר,[4] מעבר אל עבר,[5] כגבר אין איל,[6] אשר מצאוהו, לא יתנוהו השב רוחו ושיחו, מרוב שיחו תשש כחו,[7] הלוך ילך ובכה,[8] ואור עיניו גם הם אין אתו, ונפשו נבהלה מאד,[9] הולכת שחוח,[10] לא בחיל ולא בכח כי אם ברוח נשברה[11] ומרה צרה כמבכירה,[12]
כמו הרה תקריב ללדת,[13] נחרדת, נעדרת, נרעדת, מתנודדת מקנה כצפור נודד על קן ,[14] וכאיש מסכן, לבו בקרבו המס ימס[15] מעמס, היה למס,[16] משתפך, מתהפך לכמה גוונים, מינים ממינים שונים,[17] מקרה הזמן הכהוהו,[18] פצעוהו, וימררוהו, צרות רבות חוברות אשה אל אחתה,[19] יסורין קשין ממיתה[20] כתרוהו, מנוחה

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1 יהושע ב, יא.
2 הביטוי 'תשש כח' מופיע בספרות הרבנית פעמים רבות החל בתוספתא סוטה יג,ז . הביטוי המדוייק מופיע אצל ר' משה אלשיך ,פירוש על חמש מגילות (הוצאת ח. וגשל, ירושלים, תשס"ח), משלי ל, כד: 'ואנחנו הורקנו מכלי אל כלי מגלות אל גלות ותשש כחנו'; הנ"ל, פירוש על חמש מגילות, איכה ד, יט: 'ואין לומר כי מה שרפו ידינו מן התשובה לא הסיבו נביאי השקר המבטיחים אותנו, כי אם שמכובד הצרות תשש כחנו. כי הנה לא כן הוא, כי הנה כאשר
מלאו ימינו בא קצנו הוא קץ הגלות, עם היות כי קלים היו רודפינו מנשרי שמים ולא היו יכולים להשיגנו, כי הנה על ההרים שבעליות ההרים וטרשים ושיני סלעים, שהם מכשולות שבהם הנרדף נכשל, שם דלקונו ולא השיגונו עד רדתנו מההרים אל המדבר שהוא מישור. ושם עם היותם קלים מנשרי שמים גם שם לא השיגונו אם לא על ידי שים מארבים על עבר שהיינו בורחים שם. באופן שעל ידי כן צדו אותנו, קצתם רודפים אחרינו וקצתם מארבים לפנינו, והיינו כתוא מכמר, שאם לא כן עם כל קלותם מנשרי שמים לא השיגונו. באופן כי לא מתשות כח לא שבנו ובקשנו תרופה למחלתנו, אם לא מחטאת נביאינו שנמשכה מהם רעתנו כמדובר.'
3 ישעיהו ט, יח.
4 ירמיהו ד, כ.
5 רש"י איוב פרק כ, כד: 'תחלפהו - חצים שתזרוק הקשת יחלפו את גופו לעבור מעבר אל עבר'.
6 תהלים פח, ה.
7 ראה לעיל,הערה 2.
8 תהלים קכו, ו.
9 תהלים ו, ד.
10 על פי ישעיהו ס,יד.
11 זכריה ד, ו.
12 ירמיהו ד, לא.
13 ישעיהו כו, יז.
14 השווה עם ר' יצחק בר ששת, שו"ת הריב"ש (האלמנה והאחים ראם, וילנה, תרל"ט), סימן רסח: 'התפול צפור אל דור, לצרור עליה מורדי אור. מדרור קנה מתנודדת, נרעדת מקול הקורא. כורה [!] ברעה, ואין מושיע לה. חלילה!' וכאן בלשון היפוך, נפש השבוי כן נרעדת ונחרדת כצפור המתנודדת מקינה.
15 שמואל א' כח, לז עם שמואל ב' יז, י.
16 על פי איכה א, א.
17 ראה ספר חסידים (מוסד הרב קוק, ירושלים, תשי"ז) 'ברית עולם ושומר הברית' סימן תרמד: 'ועל כל פסוק יש בו פרד"ס מינים ממינים שונים וזה ידוע ומפורסם'. הביטוי חוזר פעמים רבות בפירושיו של ר' משה אלשיך, וראה פירוש על התורה, תורת משה (הוצאת ח. וגשל, ירושלים,תש"ן), דברים לב ד"ה 'ימצאהו בארץ' ; אלשיך,פירוש על חמש מגילות, משלי כא ד"ה (כג): 'הנה ישקיף וירא'; אלשיך, פירוש על חמש מגילות, קהלת ז ד"ה (כו): 'עודנו לבה, הן תאוות לבה'; ר' משה אלשיך, חבצלת השרון, פירוש על ספר דניאל (דפוס ישראל בר' אברהם מיעסניץ, ווענזבעק , תפ"ז), ב ד"ה (לז): 'אנתה אל הרפיון'; אלשיך ,שם , פרק ה ד"ה א]:'בלשאצר חמרא'.
18 והשווה עם אלשיך, פירוש על התורה, תורת משה, ויקרא כו, מד: 'ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ איביהם לא מאסתים ולא געלתים לכלתם להפר בריתי אתם כי אני ה' אלהיהם: ליישב מה שהערנו בכתוב, נשית לב אל סדר הייסורין. והנה הם ששה חלקים נחלקים לארבעה. והוא כי בשלש ראשונות הורה שעד שלש פעמים אינו מתפרד מאתנו, רק מייסרנו על ידו ומשלח בנו מכים והוא עמנו ואינו מניחנו למקרי הזמן.'
19 שמות כו, ג.
20 מי שנמסר (לדין הגויים) סובל יסורים קשים ממיתה, והשווה: שולחן ערוך ,יורה דעה, הלכות כוכבים ומזלות, סימן קנז, ס"ק ח. וראה לעיל, בפרק ההקדמה.

הדריכהו,[21] השיגוהו בין המצרים.[22] כעת הראשון,[23] בשומו לדרך פעמיו לבא אל ארץ הקדש דרך אניה בלב ים,[24] ודוגיאות זדים אכזרים יצאו גדודים,[25] שבוהו, שעבדוהו, שודדוהו וכל מאדו , והוא כביר מצאה ידו,[26]

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21 שופטים כ, מג.
22 איכה א, ג.
23 ישעיהו ח, כג.
24 משלי ל, יט.
25 מלכים ב' ה, ב.
26 הביטוי מופיע שוב ושוב בפירושיו של ר' משה אלשיך, פירוש על התורה, תורת משה , שמות כה ד"ה: 'וידבר ה' (בראשית כח, כב) וכל אשר תתן לי עשר אעשרנו לך. ואמר (דברי הימים א' כט, י) מעולם ועד עולם, שהברכה והשפע תמשך מן העולם העליון משתלשל דרך העולמות עד העולם השפל. אבל אנחנו לא לנו ה' לא לנו תפארת הנדבה אלינו. כי הלא חמשה המה בחינות אשר יפול לב אדם.' עליהם לייחס את עצמו להתגאות במעשה הצדקה אשר יעשה האדם, ומה גם בהיות הון רב. א. כי יתן בכיס עינו ויראה כי רב חילו וכי כביר מצאה ידו להרבות מאד מוהר ומתן. ב. על ההתגברות אשר התגבר על יצר סמוך המפציר עד בוש ברוצה להתנדב לעכב בידו, והוא גבור כובש את יצרו. ג. כי יתפאר באומרו כי מממונו נעשה בית מושב לשכון יה אלהים. ד. על הטוב הנמשך לאדם על ידי הצדקה, והוא כי בה מצא חיים כי צדקה תציל ממות. ה. נמשכת גם היא מהצדקה, והיא הוד שפע ברכה כענין עשר בשביל שתתעשר (שבת קיט, א)'; אלשיך, שם, ויקרא כא ד"ה 'קדשים יהיו יאמר אשר יכבדוהו אנשים. על כן כנגד ארבעה דברים אלו דבר בן זומא, ויגלה עפר מעיני כל אשר טח מראות עיניו מהביט אל האמת. ואמר אשר יאמר כי חכם יקרא המלמד לזולת, אין זה תוארו האמתי כי אם אדרבה הלמד מכל אדם כאשר נבאר בס"ד. וכן אשר יאמר כי גבור הוא גבור הכח באבריו, לא כן הוא כי אם הכובש את יצרו אף אם חלש שבחלשים יהיה. וכן אשר בלב כל איש כי עשיר הוא אשר כביר מצאה ידו, נהפוך הוא כי אדרבה רש הוא כי מרבה נכסים מרבה דאגה (אבות ב, ז), אך לא יקרא עשיר כי אם השמח בחלקו המועט. וכן אשר אמר איזהו מכובד, לא אשר יכבדוהו כי אם אדרבה המכבד את הבריות כאשר נבאר בס"ד: עוד יתכן דרך שני, והוא מחלוקת אחרונים במאמר הידוע מרבותינו ז"ל (נדרים לח, א) בגדרי תוארים המיוחדים לנבואה, הלא המה חכם גבור עשיר ועניו'; ר' משה אלשיך, ספר רוממות אל, פירוש על תהלים (כלילת יופי, ניו יארק, תשל"ז) , י ד"ה (ב): 'ועוד כי גם מהעלים בצרת ישראל בגלותם תימשך גם בישראל איש באחיו צרה גדולה עד מאד, כי יהיה רשע מכתיר את הצדיק, בראות רשע כי כביר מצאה ידו ואל זה יביט אל עני ונכה רוח וחרד על דבר ה', וצריך למטעמותיו של הרשע ההוא. כי כמקרה אישי ישראל העניים והאביונים אשר תחת מלך ושרים בגליות, גם לעני אשר מלחם איש עשיר רשע ורע יאכל, גם הוא יקרנו, כי כאשר רוח המושל על ישראל יתנשא לאמר כי ידו רמה כי שרו או מזלו גרם לו למשול על עם דל, ככה יעשה הרשע רע והוא עשיר הזן את העני, כי גדול כבודו על המסכן ההוא, חושב כי אותו אהב ה' ויעשירנו ואת הדל שנא וירושנו, ועוד מעט גם על ה' תגעל נפשו כי יתן זה כחו לכוכבו, ושלא ה' פעל כל זאת, עד אמור בלבו אין אלקים חלילה, ומן אז יחדל מלהיטיב לדל, ואדרבה לא ישקוט עד יגאה כשחל יצודנו וידכאנו תחת רגליו ויאכל גם אכול'; ר' משה אלשיך, רב פנינים, פירוש על משלי (זואן די גארה, ויניציאה, שס"א), ו ד"ה (ו – ח):'אשר יצטרך לסגל לחיי העולם שכלו ארוך, כי שם ביתו ומערכת שולחנו האמתי והקַיָם לאורך ימים, שלא יאות תשבע עינו בזוודין קלילין לאורחא רחיקא, ומהראוי לו ידון ק"ו ויאמר, האם על ימי שנותינו ע' שנה כי הבל המה בערך עולם שכלו ארוך, יומם ולילה לא ישבותו בני אדם גם בני איש, לעשות בכל מלאכה ולחשוב מחשבות, לעשות בזהב ובכסף ובנחושת, לכלכל את החומר הלז בהבל ימיו, ואף גם אשר כביר מצאה ידו למלאת ספקו, בימי הבלו זה עשר פעמים, יצר לו מהשיב ידו מלעמול תחת השמש, לצבור כעפר כסף מנעוריו וגם עד זקנה ושיבה....'; ר' משה אלשיך, ספר חלקת מחוקק, ביאור ספר איוב (זואן די גארה, ויניציאה, שס"ג), לא ד"ה (כד) :'אם לכתם חשוב מזהב אז לא בלבד שמתי בלבי, כי אם ואומר לכל שהוא מבטחו מכל צרה: וזהו ולכתם אמרתי מבטחי וזה מפאת התועלת והצלה מצרה וגם בכל א' יש בחינת כבוד עשרו כי במדרגה הראשונה ישמח כי רב חילו, כי כל בני עירו מכבדין אותו מפני עשרו, ועליה אמר (כה) אם אשמח כי רב חילי, ובהגיע אל המדרגה השנית המתייחסת לכתם ישמח יותר, כי לא בלבד יכבדוהו העם, כי אם גם כביר מצאה ידו, כי יקנה חיל מקנת כסף עבדים ושפחות וזהו כביר מצאה ידי, כי הם לו מאשר השיגה ידו, הנה משום זהב כסלי כו' ומשמוח כי רב חילי כו' הייתי נמשך חלילה לטעות אחר הוברי השמים, באמור כי מהם בא לי העושר מתבואות שמש או גרש ירחים וכיוצא'; אלשיך, פירוש על חמש מגילות , אסתר, א ד"ה (ד): 'והנה וכו', לומר כי אשר עשה משתה כו' בעוד שרי המדינות לפניו היה בהראותו את עושר וכו' שמנים ומאת יום. והוא כי לתוך האהבה עשה המשתה, ולבל ימשך ממנו בזיון היה המשתה בעת הראות עשרו, כדעת רב ושמואל במדרש (אסתר רבה ב, ה) כי בזה מלבד הראותו שלא ישתוו אליו, כיוון להפיל חתיתו ומוראו עליהם שייראו מלפניו. כי יאמרו מה נרדוף לו ומי יערב אל לבו לקשור עליו קשר, והלא כביר מצאה ידו להפיל ולהשפיל את כל המורדים בו. ועל כן נאמר בהראותו ולא ויראם, לומר כי אשר נאמר עשה משתה וכו' היה בעת הראותו או סמוך לו, לבעבור תהיה קשר האהבה וקניית היראה באים כאחד'; אלשיך חבצלת השרון,פירוש על ספר דניאל , ג ד"ה (לב) :'אתיא לפעמו, קו לקו עד הביאו אותו לדבר ולומר השמים אעלה וגו' אעלה על במותי עב וגו'. מיום נתן ה' בידו את יהויקים מלך יהודה ומקצת כלי בית האלקים. ואשר אחרי כן אכלנו הממנו שלח ידיו בשלומיו ית' ואת נוהו השמו, אז גבה לבו לבלתי תת זו כחו לאלקי עולם ה' הנותן לו כח לעשות חיל. כי בראשונה בתת ה' בידו את יהויקים ומקצת כלי וגו' נתן זו כחו לאלוהו כאשר כתבנו בראש הספר. ואחרי כן בראותו כי כביר מצאה ידו אז אמר כי כחו ועוצם ידו עשה לו את כל הכבוד ההוא, כי אלהים הוא כדברי רז"ל. והיה מפרסם הדבר בכל מלכותו למען יעבדוהו כאלוה.' כל השימושים מדברים באדם שצלחה דרכו,והוא סבור שהצלחתו באה לו מעוצם ידו שלו,בעוד שלמעשה היא באה מרצון האל. הביטוי "כביר מצאה ידו" המופיע כאן אומר על כן שהשבוי הצליח לפדות עצמו בכוחו הוא, ומרמז לכך שלא היה זה בזכות תושייתו ועשרו אלא בשל רצון האל.

ספו תמו מן בלהות[27] ומהומות ,הרה עמל וילד און,[28] והאחרון הכביד[29] בנפול ביד צר, מן המצר [30] תקצר נפשו בעמלו ,[31] ענו בכבל רגלו, ברזל באה נפשו,[32] ביסורים מרים בקולרין ובשלשלאות,[33] לולי ה' צבאות במופת ובאות הותיר לנו שריד[34] לשום לו שארית ,[35] אשר נתן בלב היהודים לתת פדיון נפשו, ולא עצרו חיל להוציא ממסגר אסיר.[36] והנה כעת נשאר ערם ועריה,[37] אחרי צאתו מהשביה יצא נקי מנכסיו, ויזעק לפנינו זעקה גדולה ומרה במרירות נפשו,[38] יריע אף יצריח,[39] יום ליום יריע[40] ישמיע יודיע צערו לרבים, בערב ילין בכי ולבקר יאמר מי יתן מותי בצאתי מרחם אמי, מבטן יצאתי ואגוע,[41] ואל אראה ברעה אשר ימצא אותי,[42] יום יום יעמוס כמוץ גבבתו,[43] סופה, קלון מתמיד וחרפה רצופה, כי גם אחותו הבתולה הקרובה אליו עזב ברודס,[44] מוטלת על ערש דוי בערום, ובצמא ובחוסר כל.[45] ובלב חמרמר גמר ואמר, אלכה לי אל הגדלים,[46] אלקטה נא ואספתי בעמרים,[47] אשא עיני אל ההרים,[48] המה הגברים,[49] עדת אבירים, גבירים לעמוד בפרץ, אשר בכל עיר ועיר ובכל מקום אשר דבר המלך מגיע,[50] לעשות צדקה ומשפט,[51] אולי יחנן ה' , ה' צבאות [52] יאסוף בחפניו זעיר פה זעיר שם, הלא מעט מצער, מסער, מזער הוא , ותחי נפשו. ועתה כמשלש חדשים, בא אל שער עירנו, וגם פה עשינו עמו חסד כפי יכלתנו. ועתה, אחינו אנשי גאולתינו, תיקר נא נפש העני הזה בעיניכם, הענק תעניקו לו מסת נדבת ברכת ידכם, לתת לו צדה לדרך, ויהמו נא רחמי צדקתכם מפני צוקת צעקת הדל, תקשיבו ותושיעו להפגיע בעדו ובשמו, רש הו[!] הולך בתמו,[53] וטעמו בל עמו מרוב לחצו ודוחקו, והנה תסבינה אלמת,[54] אימות, חימות השתרגו עלו על צוארו, ומברכתכם יבורך העני הזה, כי זאת נחלת תהלת עבדי ה', וצדקתם עומדת לעד, כגוי אשר צדקה עשה,[55] ואנחנו נחלץ חושים בתפלה ותחנה לפני שוכן מעונה, אלהי

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[27] תהלים עג, יט.
[28] איוב טו, לה.
[29] ישעיהו ח, כג.
[30] תהלים קיח, ה.
[31] שופטים י, טז.
[32] תהלים קה, יח.
[33] מדרש תנחומא (מהדורת שלמה בובר, וילנה, תרמ"ה), פרשת שופטים סימן י ד"ה [י] '(וישתחוו לך) כל אלהים (תהלים צז, ז), כשידין לאומות העולם ידין לאלהיהם עמהם, שנאמר כי באש ה' נשפט וגו' (ישעיהו סו, טז), כיון שאין יכולין לעמוד באש פורחין והקב"ה משלח מלאכים בקולרין ובשלשלאות, ומשליכין אותן לתוך האור, שנאמר ולהט אותם היום הבא וגו' (מלאכי ג, יט)'.
[34] ישעיהו א, ט.
[35] על דרך בראשית מה, ז: 'וַיִּשְׁלָחֵנִי אֱלֹהִים לִפְנֵיכֶם לָשׂוּם לָכֶם שְׁאֵרִית בָּאָרֶץ וּלְהַחֲיוֹת לָכֶם לִפְלֵיטָה גְּדֹלָה', וראה גם את אלשיך פירוש על התורה, תורת משה בראשית מה, א ד"ה 'ולא יכול יוסף להתאפק'.
[36] ישעיהו מב, ז. בשבייתו השנייה לא אצרו היהודים להביא את כל דמי פדיונו.
[37] יחזקאל טז, ז.
[38] על פי בראשית כז, לד עם אסתר ד, א.
[39] ישעיהו מב, יג.
[40] פראפראזה אירונית על פי תהלים יט, ג.
[41] פאראפראזה אירונית על תהלים ל, ו עם שמואל ב' יט, א ,במדבר יב,יב ואיוב ג, יא.
[42] פאראפראזה על אסתר ח, ו.
[43] מליצה אירונית על דרך תהלים סח, כ: 'בָּרוּךְ אֲדֹנָי יוֹם יוֹם יַעֲמָס לָנוּ הָאֵל יְשׁוּעָתֵנוּ סֶלָה'.
[44] האי רודוס.
[45] פאראפראזה על דברים כח,מח.
[46] ירמיהו ה, ה.
[47] רות ב, ז.
[48] תהלים קכא, א. הפסוק השלם משלים את כוונת הסופר: ' שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶשָּׂא עֵינַי אֶל הֶהָרִים מֵאַיִן יָבֹא עֶזְרִי'.
[49] בראשית ו, ד.
[50] אסתר ד, ג.
[51] בראשית יח, יט.
[52] עמוס ה, טו.
[53] משלי יט, א.
[54] בראשית לז, ז.
[55] ישעיהו נח, ב.

קדם נקדמה פניו בתודה[56] וכו'[לי]
זכין לו טובה מרובה , כי מבית האסורין יצא, ומבין ערלים נשבה על ים המלח, ים הערבה,[57] והוא שב לביתו למצוא מנוח, מי האיש הלזה בא לזבוח זבחי צדק,[58] או נדר, או נדבה, הנה שכרו[59] וכו'[לי], עוד אני מדבר בצדקה[60].

Document I

Translation:
Epistle 54, p. 98:

(Captured by pirates in an unknown place)

The sound of a cry, shrieking and groaning reach our ears because of the distressing circumstances of this indigent, the bearer of this epistle, who is impoverished and emaciated. We have heard, and our hearts have melted[61], our strength has fled and so has our speech[62], as we have seen his anguish as he supplicates before us. As a result of the tens of thousands of hardships, desolations, and calamities, [visited upon him] by the

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[56] ראה את הפיוט 'מה לך נרדם' ממקור בלתי ידוע, הפותח את סדר הסליחות לפי נוסח עדות המזרח, והשווה לפיוט משל יהודה מן המאה השישית לספירה, שנמצא בגניזת קהיר וראה W. J. van Bekkum, *Hebrew Poetry from Late Antiquity: Liturgical Poems of Yehudah: Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary*, Brill, Leiden, 1998, p.51. השווה גם עם אלשיך, פירוש על חמש מגילות, אסתר, בהקדמת המחבר: 'משה ידבר אל ה' בתפלה ובתחנה, לפני שוכן מעונה, ימהר יחישה ביאת משה, עם ישראל עמו. טעמו וראו, כי טוב ה', זמרו לשמו כי נעים, נאוה תהלה, הללו הללויה, כי ביה ה' צור עולמים.' הביטוי האחרון הוא מתהלים צה, א.
[57] על פי דברים ג, יז: 'וְהָעֲרָבָה וְהַיַּרְדֵּן וּגְבֻל מִכִּנֶּרֶת וְעַד יָם הָעֲרָבָה יָם הַמֶּלַח תַּחַת אַשְׁדֹּת הַפִּסְגָּה מִזְרָחָה.' אולי מרמז לכך שהים בו הפליג היה לים מוות לגביו.
[58] שרשור דברים לג,יט ובראשית כד, סה.
[59] על פי ישעיהו מ, י.
[60] ארבע השורות האחרונות נוספו כנראה על ידי המעתיק כדוגמאות נוספות למה שניתן לכתוב בהזדמנות דומה לזו.
[61] Joshua 2:11.
[62] Various forms of the phrase “strength fled” (*tashash ko’ah*) appear many times in rabbinic literature, beginning with tSotah 13:7. The exact phrase (*tashash koheinu*) first appears in R. Mosheh Alshekh, *Perush ‘al hamesh megilot* [*Commentary on the Five Scrolls*], H. Wagshal [H. Vagschal], Jerusalem, 2008, commentary on Proverbs 30:24: “We have been emptied from vessel into vessel, from exile to exile, and our strength has fled”. Ibidem, on Lamentations 4:19:

One should not say that our laxity when it comes to repentance has been caused by false prophets and their promises to us; rather, our strength has fled due to the weight of our troubles. For is it not the case that when our days are completed and our end time - that is, the end of our exile - comes, even if our pursuers are lighter than eagles in the sky they could not catch us. For on the highest mountains, the most desolate peaks, the harshest crags - these are the obstacles that cause those who are pursued to stumble - there we were chased, yet they will not catch us until we descend from the mountains to the desert plain. There, even though they are lighter than eagles they cannot catch us unless they place snares on the path of our flight. This is how they trap us: some of them pursue us, and some of them ambush us, so that we are like antelopes caught in a net. For if not for this, despite their being lighter than eagles, they would not catch us. Thus, it is not because of our fled strength that we have not repented nor asked to be healed from our illness, had it not been for the iniquity of our prophets, for our misfortune extends from them, as stated.

wrath of the Lord of Hosts[63], destruction upon destruction[64] from one side to the other[65], he is likened unto a man who has no strength[66]. The burdens that have overcome him do not allow him to continue his spirited discourse for his lengthy speech has fatigued him[67]. He goes forth weeping[68] and the light in his eyes is extinguished, and his soul is verily shocked[69]. Going forth hunched over[70], not by might, nor by power, but with a broken spirit[71]. Like the anguish of a woman bringing forth her firstborn[72], like a pregnant woman who is close to giving birth[73], anxious, excluded, trembling, fleeing her nest, like a bird wandering from its home[74], and like an unfortunate man, his heart in his breast has dissolved, will melt under his burdens[75]. He is under tribute[76]. Overthrown, turned into several variants, of different types[77], the vagaries of time have beaten him[78],

[63] Isaiah 9:15.
[64] Jeremiah 4:20.
[65] Rashi on Job 20:24: "Shall pierce him - the arrows that the bow shall shoot shall pierce his body from one side to the other".
[66] Psalms 88:5.
[67] See above, note 59.
[68] Psalms 126:6.
[69] Ibidem, 6:4.
[70] Isaiah 60:14.
[71] Zechariah 4:6.
[72] Jeremiah 4:31.
[73] Isaiah 26:17.
[74] Cf. R. Yitzhaq ben Sheshet, *Responsa Rivash*, Widow and Brothers Romm, Vilna [Vilnius], 1879, 268: "Shall a bird fall into a whorl, so that those who rebel against light may bind her up? More than a sparrow flees its nest, she trembles from the voice that calls. She has sunk into evil and has no savior. Far be it". Here the language is reversed: the captive indeed trembles like a bird fleeing its nest. Additionally, both here and in the responsum there is a play on Proverbs 27:8: "As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place" (AKJV).
[75] I Samuel 28:37 with II Samuel 17:10.
[76] Based on Lamentations 1:1.
[77] See *Sefer Hasidim*, Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1957, "berit ʻolam ve-shomer ha-berit" [An Everlasting Covenant and the Guardian of the Covenant], 644: "On each verse there are 'PaRDeS' [an acronym for *peshat* - straightforward meaning; *remez* - allusion; *derash* - homiletic interpretation; *sod* - esoteric meaning] of various different types, as is well known." This phrase recurs numerous times in the commentaries of R. Mosheh Alshekh. See *Perush ʻal ha-torah - torat mosheh* [*Commentary on the Torah: Torat Mosheh*], H. Wagshal, Jerusalem, 1990, on Deuteronomy 32, s.v. "yimtza'ehu be-eretz"; idem, *Commentary on the Five Scrolls*, Proverbs 21:23, s.v. "hineh yashqif va-yere"; ibidem, Ecclesiastes 7:26, s.v. "ʻodenu libah hen ta'avat libah"; idem, *Havatzelet ha-sharon: perush ʻal sefer Dani'el* [*Rose of Sharon: Commentary on the Book of Daniel*], Israel ben Abraham of Jessnitz Printing, Wandsbeck, 1727, commentary on 2:37 s.v. "intah el ha-rifyon"; ibidem, 5:1, s.v. "belshatzar hamra".
[78] Cf. M. Alshekh, *Commentary on the Torah: Torat Mosheh*, Leviticus 26:44:

> And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God (AKJV to Leviticus 26:44): This resolves what we noted about scripture

wounded and embittered him, many trials have banded together[79], suffering worse than death has engulfed him[80], they have trod him down with ease[81], and caught up with him in the narrow straits[82]. I will recount his first loss first[83], when he set off on a journey to the Holy Land by way of a ship in the midst of the high seas[84], and malicious and cruel ships set forth in raiding parties[85] to take him captive, enslaved him, robbed him and stole all of his wealth. For his hand had gotten much[86], but his wealth

> is we pay attention to the order of punishments. There are six parts, divided into four. This is because the first three He declares that until the third time He does not depart from us, but merely punishes us and sends plagues upon us, yet He is with us and does not abandon us to the vagaries of time.

[79] Exodus 26:3.
[80] One who has been informed upon to the (Gentile) authorities endures suffering worse than death; Cf. *Shulhan ʻArukh*, Widow and Brothers Romm, Vilna, 1927, Yoreh Deʻah, Laws concerning Idolatry, 157:8. See also above, in the introductory chapter.
[81] Judges 20:43.
[82] Lamentations 1:4.
[83] Based on Isaiah 8:23.
[84] Proverbs 30:19.
[85] 2 Kings 5:2.
[86] This expression derives from Job 31:25: "If I rejoice because my wealth was great, and because my hand had gotten much" (AKJV). Variations occur repeatedly in the commentaries of R. Mosheh Alshekh: *Commentary on the Torah: Torat Mosheh*, Exodus 25:1-3, s.v. "va-yedaber":

> As its states (Genesis 28:22): "and of all that you shall give me I will surely give the tenth to you" (AKJV), and it states (1 Chronicles 29:10) "forever and ever" (lit. "from world to world"), meaning that blessing and bounty extend from the upper world and descends through the worlds to the nether world. But us? Not to us, O Lord, not to us (Psalms 115:1), for the beauty of generosity is unto us. For there are five categories into which man's heart falls, attributing things to himself and taking pride in the acts of charity he performs, especially if they involve great wealth. A) He looks at his purse and sees that he has many riches and that his hand had gotten much from which to give gifts and dowry. B) He overcomes a strong and pressing shameful urge that stays the hand of the generous; he is a strong man who suppresses his urges. C) He brags while saying that the home in which the Lord God dwells was made with his money. D) He enjoys the good that comes from one who gives charity, and he finds life in it, for charity saves from death. E) He enjoys the glorious bountiful blessing that also extends from charity, as in "tithe ('*`aser*') so that you may become rich ('*tit`asher*')" (Shabbat 119a).

Idem, Leviticus 21:6, s.v. "qedoshim yiheyu":

> So Ben Zoma speaks out against four things, thus removing the dust from the eyes of those whose vision is occluded from seeing the truth. He says that when it is said that a wise man is one who teaches others, this is not the true description, rather, on the contrary, it is one who learns from every person, as we will explain, God willing. Similarly, when it is said that a strong man is one with physical strength, this is not so; rather, it is one who suppresses his urges, even if he is the weakest of the weak. Moreover, that which all people think that a wealthy man is one whose hand has gotten much, the opposite is true, because, on the contrary, "increasing assets increases worries" (mAvot 2:7). Rather one who is content with his minimal lot shall be called rich. Additionally, when he says who is honored, it is not one who others honor, but, on the contrary, one who honors others, as we will explain, God willing. There may be another way, and this is a dispute among later authorities regarding the well-known statement of the rabbis (Nedarim 38a) about the meaning of the special characteristics conducive to prophecy, which are wisdom, strength, riches, and humility.

Idem, *Sefer romemot el: perush ʻal tehilim* [*Exaltations of God: Commentary on Psalms*], Kelilat Yofi, New York, 1977, commentary on 10:1, s.v. "ve-ʻod":

Furthermore, due to His hiding from Israel's distress in their exile, it will cause distress within Israel, from one man to his brother. For a wicked man will crown the righteous man when the wicked man finds that his hand had gotten much, and upon him will fall the gaze of the poor, the downtrodden of spirit, and the one who trembles at God's word, for he needs the food of that wicked man. For like the case of poor and destitute men of Israel under kings and princes in the exile, so too is the pauper who eats from the food of the rich, bad, wicked man, for just as the ruler is arrogant toward Israel, saying that he has power because his angel or stars caused him to rule this weak people, so shall this wicked man do if he is a rich man who feeds the poor, for his honor is greater than that of the wretched man, and it causes him to think that God loves and enriches him but despises and impoverishes the poor man. Soon enough, he will become contemptuous of God as well, ascribing his power to his star, and thinking that it was not God who did all of this, until eventually he tells himself that there is no God. From that point, he will cease being a benefactor of the weak. On the contrary, he will not rest until he rises like a lion and traps him, crushing him underfoot and consuming him.

Idem, *Rav peninim: perush ʻal mishlei* [*Many Pearls: Commentary on Proverbs*], Giovanni di Gara, Venice, 1601, commentary on 6:6-8:

So too man, for there is no limit to the treasure that he must hoard for everlasting life, for there is his true and everlasting home and set table, and it is not good for him to be content with meager victuals for a long journey. He should rather reason *a fortiori* and say: For the seventy years of our lives, which are merely a breath in comparison with the everlasting world, should one spend ceaseless days and nights doing all his work and making all his plans to accumulate gold, silver, and bronze? To weigh out these materials with the very breath of his life? And even if his hand had gotten much, enough to meet all his needs in this fleeting life ten times over, he has an urge to continue toiling under the sun, to accumulate money like it is dirt, from his youth to his old age and infirmity …

Idem, *Helqat mehoqeq: be'ur sefer iyov* [*The Lot of the Lawgiver: An Explication of the Book of Job*], Giovanni di Gara, Venice, 1603, commentary on 31:24:

If to fine gold, which is more precious than gold, then not only do I place it in my heart, I even say to all that it is my source of confidence in every distress: this is the meaning of "[If I have made gold my hope, or] have said to the fine gold, You are my confidence" (AKJV), and this is because of its efficacy and its helpfulness in rescuing from distress. So too in everyone there is an element of honor in wealth. At the first level he will rejoice that he has much prosperity, for everyone in town honors him because of his riches. About this it is stated (Job 31:25): "If I rejoice because my wealth was great". But when he reaches the second level, when relates to fine gold, he will rejoice even more, because not only do the people honor him, but if his hand had gotten much, he will buy mercenaries, slaves, and maidservants. This is the meaning of "and because my hand had gotten much", for they are his because of where his hand can reach. Thus, since "I made gold my hope …" and "I rejoice because my wealth is great …". I am therefore attracted to astrology and to say that it is from them that my wealth comes, from the sun's yield or the moon's produce".

Idem, *Commentary on the Five Scrolls*, Esther 1:4, s.v. "ve-hineh":

That is, when [Ahasuerus] made a feast, etc. while all of the provincial officers were in his presence, it was when he showed off his wealth, etc. for one hundred and eighty days. He made the feast to engender love, but so that it would not become contempt, the feast was while he showed off his wealth, in accordance with the opinion of Rav and Shemuel in the Midrash (*Esther Rabbah* 2:5). In addition to showing them that they are not equal to him, he also intended to fill them with dread and awe, so that they fear him. For they will say, how can we pursue him? Who would think it good to conspire against him? For his hand has gotten much, for cutting down and degrading all who rebel against him. Therefore, it states "while he showed off" and not "and he showed them", to teach us that the feast of which it tells us was while he showed off, so that they would relate to him with love and acquire fear at the same time.

was utterly consumed by the terrors[87] and the upheaval. He labored much and was left with nothing[88]. But the second loss affected him more grievously[89] - his fall into enemy hands. In his distress[90], his soul was grieved by his labors[91]. They hurt his foot with fetters and he was laid in iron[92], with bitter suffering, with collars around his neck and heavy chains[93], and were it not for the Lord of Hosts [who saved us] with wonders and signs, not even a small vestige of us would have remained[94] as His remnant[95]. For He inspired the Jews to pay the ransom, but nevertheless, it was not enough to gain the prisoner's release[96]. And now he remains poorly clad and bare[97], for he was released from captivity penniless, and he lets out a great and bitter cry[98] before us from his embittered soul. He shall cry,

Idem, *Rose of Sharon: Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 3:32:

A spirit of insanity slowly began to penetrate [Nebuchadnezzar], to the point where he said "I shall ascend the heavens …". "I shall ascend the high places above the clouds …". From the day that God delivered King Jehoiakim of Judah in his hand along with some of the vessels of God's temple, and then when he devoured us and crushed us, sending his hand against those at peace with God and laying waste to His abode, his heart swelled and he did not ascribe this power to the God of the world, who gave him the power to prosper. Initially, when God delivered Jehoiakim and some of the temple vessels into his hand, he ascribed this power to his deity, as we mentioned at the beginning of this book. Later, when he saw that his hand had gotten much, he said that his strength and the might of his hand created all this honor for him, for, as the rabbis say, he thought himself a god. He publicized this throughout his kingdom, so that they worship him as a god.

All of these uses speak of a person who has succeeded and who attributes his success to his own power, though in truth it comes from God's will. The appearance of the expression "his hand had gotten much" in this context therefore states that the captive managed to redeem himself through his own efforts, but intimates that it was not due to his determination or wealth, but because of God's will.

87 Psalms 73:19.

88 Job 15:35.

89 Isaiah 8:23.

90 Psalms 118:5.

91 Judges 10:16.

92 Psalms 105:18.

93 *Midrash Tanhuma*, Salomon Buber, Vilna, 1885, on *Parashat Shoftim* (the weekly Torah-reading portion corresponding to Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9), 10:10:

"[Worship Him] all you gods" (Psalms 97:7, AKJV): When [God] judges the nations of the world, He will judge their deities along with them, as it states "For with fire [and with His sword] the Lord will execute judgment [on all people]" (Isaiah 66:16, NIV). Since they cannot stand the fire, they fly away, and God sends angels with collars and heavy chains, and they cast them into the fire, as it is stated: "and the day that is coming will set them on fire" (Malachi 3:19, NIV).

94 Isaiah 1:9.

95 Echoing Genesis 45:7: "But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance" (NIV). See also R. Mosheh Alshekh: *Commentary on the Torah: Torat Mosheh* on Genesis 45:1, s.v. "ve-lo yakhol Yosef le-hitapeq".

96 Isaiah 42:7. In his second captivity, the Jews did not collect enough to pay the full ransom.

97 Ezekiel 16:7.

98 Genesis 27:34 and Esther 4:1.

indeed, roar[99]; everyday he will roar[100], making his anguish heard and known by the public. At night he will go to sleep weeping and in the morning he will declare. Would that I have died as I left my mother's womb, Why did I not perish when I came out of the belly[101], so that I would not endure the evil that has come to me[102]? Burdened every day like a pile of husk[103], constant shame and never ending disgrace for his unwed sister, who was close to him, was also left in Rhodes[104], lying on her deathbed naked and thirsty, in complete destitution[105]. For with a heart that was scalded he concluded and said, I will go to the great ones[106]. Please may I collect and gather from the sheaves[107]? I will lift my eyes to the mountains[108] - the mighty ones[109], a group of noble men, lordly men who stand in the breach in every city and in every place which the potentate's words reach[110] to execute justice and law[111]. Perhaps, God, the Lord of Hosts, will show His mercy[112] and will gather up handfuls, a bit here and a bit there - a little bit, a handful, saved from the storm. And life will be rekindled within him. For he arrived at the gates of our city about three months ago, and we have also showered him with kindness to the best of our abilities. And so, our brethren, those who can redeem us, may you cherish this poor soul, verily grant him a voluntary tribute from the blessings of your hands as sustenance for his journey, and may your merciful charity flow on hearing the distress of, the cry of, the destitute. Listen and provide him with succor by petitioning on his behalf in his name. Better is the poor man who maintains his innocence[113], for his reason has departed due to his stress and indigence. And behold your sheaves have turned to him[114], displacing the terror and anger that has almost engulfed him, so may your blessings serve to bless this poor man, for this is the inheritance, the glory of God's worshippers and their righteousness will remain forever, as a nation that has acted righteously[115], and we will gird our senses in prayer and supplication before the One who dwells in heaven, the eternal God. We will greet him with gratitude, etc.[116].

He was granted a great boon, as he was delivered from prison and from amongst the uncircumcised who had captured him on the Salt Sea, the Sea of Arabah[117] and he returned to his home to find tranquility. Who is this man who comes to offer righteous offerings[118], either a vow offering or a freewill offering, behold his recompense, etc.[119].

I will speak further about charity[120].

Document II

איגרת 148, עמ' 178 :
מליצה לעני שנשבה

מאחר עלות תהלות ותפלות לפני נורא עלילות,[121] יעמיד יתמיד חדות שלות מעוזכם ואת יקרת תפארת גדולתכם, הנה אנחנו ק"ק[122] ספרדים יצ"ו[123] שבירושלים ע"ה,[124] סובלי עול הגלות והדלות, באנו במגלת ספר זו להיות לפה ולמליץ טוב ,ולהודע , ולהשמיע ולהביע צרת, סערת, עקת האיש הלזה, דל ורזה , מוביל כתבנו זאת, זה שמו אשר יקראו[125] לו, אשר שמענו וראינו מפי סופרים ומפי ספרים[126] את כל התלאה אשר מצאוהו ותכפוהו, צרות רבות

[99] Isaiah 42:13.

[100] An ironic paraphrase of Psalms 19:3.

[101] An ironic paraphrase of Psalms 30:6, 2 Samuel 19:1, Numbers 12:12, and Job 3:11.

[102] A paraphrase of Esther 8:6.

[103] An ironic phrase based on Psalms 68:20: "Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens" (NIV).

[104] An island in the Aegean Sea.

[105] A paraphrase of Deuteronomy 28:48.

[106] Jeremiah 5:5.

[107] Ruth 2:7.

[108] Psalms 121:1. The full verse completes the author's intention: "A song of ascents. I lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from?" (NIV).

[109] Genesis 6:4.

[110] Esther 4:3.

[111] Genesis 18:19.

[112] Amos 5:15.

[113] Proverbs 19:1.

[114] Genesis 37:7.

[115] Isaiah 58:2.

[116] The last phrase is from Psalms 95:1. See also the anonymous liturgical poem "mah lekha nirdam" ["Why do you Slumber?"], recited at the beginning of the penitentiary prayers (*selihot*) by Jews of Muslim lands. Cf. the sixth century C.E. liturgical poem by Yehuda, found in the Cairo Genizah. See also: W.J. Van Bekkum, *Hebrew Poetry from Late Antiquity*, p.51. Cf. R. Mosheh Alshekh, *Commentary on the Five Scrolls*, author's introduction to Esther:

> Mosheh shall speak to God in prayer and supplication before the One who dwells in heaven, may He speed up and rush the advent of Mosheh with His people Israel. Consider and see that God is good; sing to His name for it is pleasant, worthy of praise. Praise, Hallelujah, for the Lord, God is an everlasting rock.

[117] Based on Deuteronomy 3:17: "the Arabah also, and the Jordan and the border thereof , from Chinnereth even unto the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, under the slopes of Pisgah eastward" (ASV). The verse refers to the Dead Sea, whereas the events described by the author take place on the Mediterranean. Perhaps the author compares the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea on account of the deadly tribulations that assailed the bearer of the letter on the Mediterranean.

[118] A concatenation of paraphrases of Deuteronomy 33:19 and Genesis 24:65.

[119] Based on Isaiah 40:10.

[120] The last five lines were presumably added by the copyist who sought to provide additional examples of what could be written in such a case.

[121] ראה אוצר המדרשים (הוצאת יהודה דוד איזנשטיין, ניו יורק, תרע"ה), היכלות, עמ' 111 ד"ה 'בשם יהדריא"ל אלקי עלי, שנאמר קק"ק ה' צבאות מלא כל הארץ כבודו, מי כה' אלהינו מי כאדוננו מי כמלכנו מי כיוצרנו, אין קדוש כה' כי אין בלתך ואין צור כאלהינו. - אמר ר' ישמעאל כל השירות הללו וכל המעשה הזה שמע ר' עקיבא כשירד למרכבה ותפס ללמוד אותם מלפני כבודו, שהיו משוררים לפניו משרתיו ברוך הוא וברוך שמו, ויברכו את שם כבודך, ומתרומם על כל ברכה ותהלה. תם ונשלם מסכת היכלות, תהלה לאל נורא עלילות.'

[122] קהל קדוש.

[123] ישמרם צורם ויגאלם.

[124] עיר הקודש.

[125] על פי ירמיהו כג, ו.

[126] ראה למשל ר' משה אלמושנינו, פרקי משה על אבות (בית יוסף יעבץ, שאלוניקי, שכ"ג; דפוס צילום: אוצר החכמה, ירושלים, תשע"ג), ד: 'ועל זה הזהיר, שאחרי אשר יעלה בידו למוד התורה מפי סופרים ומפי ספרים'.

ורעות סובבוהו, והוא שקט על שמריו בארץ מולדתו,[127] שבו אותו שבאים גויים, וענו בכבל רגלו,[128] וישב אצלם ויעבדם שלש עשרה שנה,[129] ולא מצא ידו כדי גאולתו כי השבאי היה רוצה בפידיונו סך גרו'[ש], והלך מדחי אל דחי, עד אשר בא לק"ק פ'[פלוני], ושם השתדלו בכל מאמצי כחם. ועתה שאגה לו כלביא[130] להוציא אוכל לנפשו, לחם צר ומ'[ים] לחץ,[131] והארץ הזאת ארץ הנגב[132] ואין הוא מצוי בה, לכן גמר אומר לשוב אל ביתו ואל מולדתו, ואין בידו אגורת כסף לפיזורים ולהוצאת הדרכים, כי זה חלקו מכל עמלו,[133] מקלו ותרמילו.[134] וזאת נדרשנו מאתו לכתו'[ב] לו שורותים אלו, יהיו לו לפה ולמליץ בכל מקום אשר תדרוך כף רגלו במחנה קדושתכם, יתנו לו די מחסרו אשר יחסר לו,[135] ולהדריכו בדרך ישרה למחוז חפצו לשלום, ולתת לו צדה לדרך,[136] ויחשב לכם לצדקה,[137] כי הוא כמו פדיון שבויים ממש,[138] ואתם כהני ה' עליכם משפט הגאלה,[139] בכל מקום אשר יבוא שמה האיש העני הזה דל ורזה, יהי נא חסדיכם חסד גדול מעל לשמים, ויהי נא פי שנים ברוחכם,[140] רוח נדיבה, לסמוך ולתמוך בימינו, ולפתוח לו את ידיכם הרחבה,[141] והענק תעניקו לו מגרני צדקתכם ומיקבי חסדיכם במנה יפה כמו שחר נשקפה,[142] למען ישוב אל ביתו שמח וטוב לב,[143] כמנהגכם הטוב ודרככם כל הימים, ואל ישוב דך ונכלם, ואתם אנשי לבב[144] ותעודה, היושבים על התורה ועל העבודה, שאו ידכם קדש[145] ומלאו את ידו, ובשכר זאת וכ'[ולי]

אנשים הנגשים אל ה',[146] המשתדלים בפדיון שבוים, ואזרו חיל,[147] וישברו מתלעות עול,[148] ויפדוהו מידו, וישלחוהו עד הלום, כי נפשו חשקה לשבת בארץ החיים,[149] ארץ הצבי , ולחסות תחת כנפי השכינה,[150] ועתה וכ'[ולי].

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[127] על פי ירמיהו מח,יא עם בראשית יא, כח.

[128] תהלים קה, יח.

[129] על פי בראשית כט, יד-ל. יעקב עבד את לבן ארבע עשר שנים כדי לזכות ברחל, לעומת נושא האיגרת שעבד את שוביו שלוש עשר שנים.

[130] ישעיהו ה, כט.

[131] ישעיהו ל, כ.

[132] שופטים א, טו. ארץ הנגב היא ארץ יבשה וענייה.

[133] קהלת ב, י.

[134] משנה יבמות טז, ז.

[135] דברים טו, ח.

[136] על פי בראשית מב, כה.

[137] על פי תהלים קו, לא.

[138] פדיון שבויים הוא "מצווה רבה", כי השביה יש בה כל המכאובים האפשריים (ראה בגוף הספר, בהקדמה), הכותבים טוענים שסיוע לשבוי המשוחרר להגיע לביתו הינו שווה ערך לפדייתו.

[139] ירמיהו לב, ז.

[140] על פי מלכים ב' ב, ט.

[141] על פי ברכת המזון: 'אֱלֹהֵינוּ אָבִינוּ רְעֵנוּ, זוּנֵנוּ, פַּרְנְסֵנוּ וְכַלְכְּלֵנוּ וְהַרְוִיחֵנוּ וְהַרְוַח לָנוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְהֵרָה מִכָּל צָרוֹתֵינוּ. וְנָא אַל תַּצְרִיכֵנוּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ לֹא לִידֵי מַתְּנַת בָּשָׂר וָדָם וְלֹא לִידֵי הַלְוָאָתָם כִּי אִם לְיָדְךָ הַמְּלֵאָה, הַפְּתוּחָה, הַקְּדוֹשָׁה, הָרְחָבָה שֶׁלֹּא נֵבוֹשׁ וְלֹא נִכָּלֵם לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.'

[142] על פי שיר השירים ו, י.

[143] אסתר ה, ט.

[144] איוב לד, י.

[145] על פי תהלים קלד, ב.

[146] על פי שמות יט, כב.

[147] שמואל א' ב, ד.

[148] על פי איוב כט, יז.

[149] ארץ החיים היא ארץ המתים, וכאן בהיפוך משמעות אירוני מרמז לארץ ישראל, שהיא ארץ צחיחה ויבשה מכל, וראה את אלשיך, ספר רוממות אל, פירוש על תהלים קמב ד"ה (ו) 'זעקתי אליך, כי אם אין אתה לי מי לי, כי אתה ה' בעל הרחמים. ושמא תאמר, אחר שאין דורש לנפשך ואין מימינים מלמדי זכות עליך, אם כן גם אני אסכים ואיך אצילך, הנה אשר אמרתי בלבי, הוא כי בלי ספק אתה מחסי, אלא שרצונך יהיה חלקי בארץ החיים ולא בעולם הזה, ועל כן תחפוץ לסלקני.'

[150] על פי מדרש תהלים שוחר טוב (מהדורת שלמה בובר, וילנה, תרנ"א), מזמור מו: 'וכתיב כי הנני בורא (השמים החדשים והארץ החדשה) [שמים חדשים וארץ חדשה] (ישעיה סה, יז), והיכן הצדיקים עמדו באותה שעה, יהיו דבוקים בכסא הכבוד תחת כנפי השכינה, שנאמר ואתם הדבקים בה' אלהיכם חיים כלכם היום (דברים ד, ד).'

Document II

Translation
Epistle 148, p. 178:

An Intercession for a Captive Pauper.

After offering praise and prayers before the awesome Doer of Deeds[151], may He continue to uphold the joy and tranquility of your strongholds and the glorious grandeur of your greatness, behold, we the holy community of Sephardic Jews, may their Rock protect and redeem them, in Jerusalem, the holy city, who are suffering the yoke of exile and penury, have set forth in this scroll-book [the request] that you speak for us and be our beneficent intercessor, to inform and make known, and express the tempestuous woes that have distressed this indigent and emaciated man, the bearer of this letter. This is the name that he should be called[152], which we have heard of from authors and read in books[153], all of the hardships that visited him incessantly, many evil troubles have encompassed him. He was living tranquilly[154] in the land of his birth[155]; he was taken captive by Gentile captors who came and injured his foot with fetters[156]; and he was held captive and enslaved by them for thirteen years[157]; and he did not succeed in gathering the money to redeem himself because his captors demanded a ransom of so many kuruş[158]. so he went from bad to worse, until he arrived at the holy community of X and there they exerted themselves with all their might [to redeem him]. And now he roars like a lion[159] seeking to obtain food for himself, [but he obtains] the bread of afflic-

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[151] See *Otzar ha-midrashim* [*A Treasury of Homilies*], Judah David Eisenstein, New York, 1915, Hekhalot, p. 111, s.v. "be-shem yehadri'el elokei eli":

As it is stated: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is filled with His glory. Who is like the Lord our God? Who is like our Master? Who is like our King? Who is like our Creator? There is none as holy as the Lord, for there is none but You, and there is no Rock like our God. Rabbi Ishmael said: All of these poems and all of these acts were heard by Rabbi Akiva when he descended to the divine chariot and grasped them, studying them before His glory. For His attendants were singing before Him: Blessed is He and blessed is His name. And they shall bless the name of Your glory, exalted above all blessing and praise. Thus concludes the tractate of *Hekhalot.* Praised be the awesome Doer of deeds.

[152] Based on Jeremiah 23:6.

[153] See, for example, R. Mosheh Almosnino, *Pirqei mosheh ʿal avot* [*Chapters of Moses on (Tractate) Avot*], Yosef Yaʿabetz Printing House, Salonika [Thessaloniki], 1563; photo offset: Otzar Ha-hokhma, Jerusalem, 2013), p. 4: "He cautioned about this, for once he has succeeded in studying Torah from authors and from books".

[154] Jeremiah 48:11.

[155] Genesis 11:28.

[156] Psalms 105:18.

[157] Based on Genesis 29:14-30. Jacob served Laban for fourteen years to win the hand of Rachel. In contrast, the subject of the letter served his captors for thirteen years.

[158] See above in the main text, note 61.

[159] Isaiah 5:29.

tion and the water of adversity[160], for the land was "the land of the Negev"[161], and he was not acquainted with its ways; therefore, he decided to return to his home, the land of his birth, but he did not have even a farthing to spend or to pay for travel expenses, for all he had gained through his labors[162] was his staff and his pack[163]. And for this reason, he has importuned us to write these lines for him, so that they may be a mouthpiece and an intercessor in every place that he sets foot in your holy camps, and you will give him enough to supply his want, that which he lacks[164], and instruct him in the straightest route that will bring him safely to his desired destination, and grant him sustenance for the journey[165], and this will be considered a righteous act on your parts[166], for this [enabling him to reach his home] is exactly like redeeming him from captivity[167], for you are the priests of God, the law of redemption is upon you[168]. May your kindness reach beyond the very heavens and may you give him twice [what he needs] in your spirited generosity[169], at every place that this poor, indigent, and emaciated man arrives. To support him on his right and open up your generous hands[170], verily granting him from your righteous granaries and your kind vineyards a goodly portion like the rising of the dawn[171], so that he may return to his home joyous and with a gladdened heart[172], in keeping with your customary goodness and your quotidian ways. So, may he not return depressed and ashamed, for you are people known for your great hearts[173] and it is attested that you immerse yourselves in Torah and good deeds. Raise up your hands in the sanctuary[174] [to perform holy deeds] and fill his hands, and in recompense for this, etc.

Those people who come near to the Lord[175], who try to redeem captives, and have girded themselves with strength[176] and have broken the jaws of the wicked man[177], and redeemed him [this captive] from his hand, and sent him

[160] Ibidem, 30:20.
[161] Allusion to Judges 1:15. The Negev is known to be dry and sparsely vegetated.
[162] Ecclesiastes 2:10.
[163] mYevamot 16:7.
[164] Deuteronomy 15:8.
[165] Based on Genesis 42:25.
[166] Based on Psalms 106:31.
[167] The redemption of captives is a "great mitzvah" because captivity includes all possible torments (see in the main text, Introduction). The writers contend that helping a released captive return home is equivalent to his actual redemption.
[168] Jeremiah 32:7.
[169] 2 Kings 2:9.
[170] Based on the Grace after Meals:

> Our God, our Father: tend to us, nourish us, sustain us, feed us, and provide us with plenty; and speedily, Lord our God, grant us relief from all our afflictions. L-rd our G-d, please do not make us dependent upon the gifts of mortal men nor upon their loans, but only upon Your full, open, holy, and generous hand, that we may never be shamed or disgraced.

[171] Based on Song of Songs 6:10.
[172] Job 34:10.
[173] Esther 5:9.
[174] Based on Psalms 134:2.
[175] Based on Exodus 19:22.
[176] 1 Samuel 2:4.
[177] Based on Job 29:17.

hither, for his soul wished to dwell in the land of the living[178], the land of Israel, and to take refuge under the wings of the Divine presence[179], and now, etc.[180].

Document III

איגרת 155, עמ' 187-188 (פורסמה על ידי מאיר בניהו ללא אפראט מדעי ביחסים שבין יהודי יוון ליהודי איטליה, עמ' 244-246) :
(על שבוי במסינה)

ישבי על מדין הולכי על דרך סלולה,[181] להעמיד ארץ במשפט וצדקה תכונן ציון[182] עבודה כירושלים על תלה, המה הגברים,[183] עם אלדי אברהם זרע קדש,[184] עם סגלה,[185] אנשי היחס והמעלה,[186] פנות צבאות קדושים,[187] רוממי שדי באהבה כלולה.[188] זריזין מקדימין לכל דבר שבקדושה,[189] להוציא אסירים בכושרות,[190] כסף לא יחשבו,[191]

[178] The "land of the living" refers to the land of the dead. Here, however, in an ironic inversion, it alludes to the land of Israel, which is the driest and most parched of lands. On this, see R. Mosheh Alshekh, *Exaltations of God: Commentary on Psalms*, commentary on 142:6:

> I called out to You, for if You are not for me, who is for me? For You, God, are the Merciful One. Lest one say that since there is none that seeks [to save] your life and none have been appointed to defend you, I must therefore agree, and how can I save you? I will say in my heart that without a doubt You are my refuge. However, you wish for my lot to be in the land of the living, not in this world, and therefore You wish to remove me.

[179] Based on *Midrash tehilim shoher tov* [*Homilies on Psalms*], Salomon Buber, Vilna, 1891, on Psalms 46: It is stated: 'See, I will create new heavens and a new earth' (Isaiah 65:17, NIV). Where will the righteous stand at that moment? They will cleave to the Throne of Glory, under the wings of the Divine presence, as it is stated: 'but all of you who held fast to the Lord your God are still alive today' (Deuteronomy 4:4, NIV).
[180] The last paragraph might have been added by the Jerusalem scribe, as an example of what can bewritten for a redeemed captive who wishes to go to Jerusalem.
[181] על דרך שופטים ה, י.
[182] על פי משלי כט, ד: 'מֶלֶךְ בְּמִשְׁפָּט יַעֲמִיד אָרֶץ וְאִישׁ תְּרוּמוֹת יֶהֶרְסֶנָּה" וכל המשפט הוא קונבנציה מקובלת באגרות של סוף ימי הבינים וראה שו"ת הריב"ש ,סימן עט:'נאמן אהבתכם יצחק ב"ר ששת זלה"ה. שעל הכתב יושבי על מדין, הולכי על דרך סלולה, להעמיד ארץ במשפט, ונבנתה על תלה. המה הגבורים, אל דבר השם חרדים, השרידים יחידי סגולה, מנהיגים קהל קוסטנטינה זקניה ושופטיה.'
[183] בראשית ו, ד.
[184] ישעיהו ו, יג.
[185] דברים יד, ב.
[186] קונבנציה מקובלת מתחילת המאה השש עשרה לפחות וראה ר' דוד הכהן, שו"ת הרד"ך (חמו"ל, ירושלים, תשכ"ח), בית א:'הלא הם אנשי היחס והמעלה לשם ולתהלה'.
[187] הביטוי הזה מופיע בתפילת שחרית . ראה גם ר' אברהם בן דוד מפּוֹשְׁקְיֶרָה (ראב"ד), ספר האמונה הרמה (מהדורת שמשון בן לייב וייל, פרנקפורט דמיין,תרי"ג), מאמר א, פרק ח: 'פינות צבאות קדושים רוממי שדי, תמיד מספרים כבוד אל וקדשתו.'
[188] זהו ביטוי די נדיר בספרות של היהדות הספרדית והמזרחית. ראיתיו לראשונה בפיוט של משורר יהודי בן המחצית השניה של המאה התשיעית, אמיתי בר' שפטיה מאוריה (Oria שבמחוז אפוליה באיטליה. בשירו "אַפָפוּנוּ מָיִם עַד נֶפֶשׁ", מוֹפִיעַ הביטוי 'אֲהַבְתִּיךְ אַהֲבָה כְּלוּלָה, כָּמֵהַּ שָׁנִים בַּגּוֹלָה, בְּכֹל עִנּוּי וְתַאֲלָה, לְךָ לְבַד אֲיַחֲלָה' וראה ח' שירמן, מבחר השירה העברית באיטליה (הוצאת שוקן , ברלין, תרצ"ד), עמ' ב-ג. הביטוי מופיע גם בתפילת מעריב בשבת הנופלת בחול המועד, מחזור ויטרי (חמו"ל, ירושלים, תשמ"ח), סימן תמט: 'שבת נחלו אל לעמו באהבה כלולה. כי בו שבת רב עלילה.' גם הוא מקור אשכנזי.
[189] על פי פסחים דף ד ,ע"א: 'זריזין מקדימין למצות.'
[190] על פי תהלים סח, ז: 'אֱלֹהִים מוֹשִׁיב יְחִידִים בַּיְתָה מוֹצִיא אֲסִירִים בַּכּוֹשָׁרוֹת אַךְ סוֹרֲרִים שָׁכְנוּ צְחִיחָה.'
[191] ישעיהו יג, יז.

זלים זהב מכיס[192] בחנינה וחמלה, לשלח רצוצים חפשים,[193] ידדון ידדון לחלק שלל ברוח נדיבה לתהלה,[194] המה הגברים אשר מעולם אנשי השם[195] יקרא להם, לכל דבר עבודת השי"ת[196] והדור שמו הנכבד והנורא, המה יעלו בתחלה[197] לכח אמיץ, הנה גבורי כח לעשות רצון קונם בכל לבם ובכל ממונם,[198] והיום הוא ברחמיו תמיד יהיה בעזרם, ומעתה לא יחסרו כל טוב,[199] ובכבוד תרום קרנם, והיו למאורת [200] העומדים למחסה ולמסתור[201] ועוז ועזרה בצרות, בכל עיר ומדינה, לא יעפו ולא יגעו,[202] בפרע פרעות בישראל,[203] יחליפו כח באמונה. ובפרט ראשיהם, זקניהם, פרנסיהם וטוביהם , העמדים על הפקדים,[204] לזכות את הרבים,[205] לחונן דלים[206] אומללים, חמלתם מיחלים, דורשים ושואלים,[207] ועליהם בראש, ראש מר צרור,[208] חלקם בחיים נצחיים, החכמים השלמי'[ם] ברך ה' חילם, וינטלם וינשאם כל ימי עולם,[209] יעלו במעלות הסולם שיעקב אבינו חלם[210] אנסו'.[211]
אחר עתרת שלום ואמת[212] כדת מה לעשות,[213] אותיותינו אלה אותות עליונות, להודיע, להשמיע, באזני מעלת תהלתכם, צרת הבחור הלזה, דל ורזה, מוביל כתבנו זה, ההולך לעומת עצמת, חכמת, בינת חכמתכם ובינתכם, שמו אשר יקראו[214] פ'[לוני], אשר פתאם שדדו אהליו[215] ונלכד כתא מכמר,[216] והנה לשלום לו מר צועק מצרתו בלב חמרמר,[217] ביד גוי ערל וטמא זה, כמה הומה בבור השביה, הלך שבי לפני צר אכזרי ולא ירחם, של ארץ רחוקה בוקה ומבלקה,[218] היתה לבני ישראל למכשול ולפוקה,[219] תאכלנה אש לא נופח,[220] ורבה הדליקה, היא העיר אשר אררה ה',[221] הכינה באפו ובחמתו, מוכנת לפורענות לישראל. היתה למכה עיר מסינה, עקרון תעקר,[222] כי זה ג' שנים שם במתניו מועקה,[223] עד אשר ראה ה' בעניו, וסבב סיבות שבא פה עיר פ'[לונית] בשלשלאות של ברזל בידי אדונים קשה, ענה בכבל רגלו ברזל באה נפשו,[224] וישימוהו במאסר מקום אשר אסירי המלך אסורים[225] שם, וברוך ה' אשר לא השבית לעמו גואל, לצאן מרעיתו גואלים חזקים, אחר כל [...] אותו, והודיע צרתו ליחידי גאולתנו, סגולתנו, אנשי

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192 ישעיהו מו, ו.
193 על פי ישעיהו נח, ו.
194 על פי תהלים סח, יג.
195 בראשית ו, ד.
196 השם יתברך.
197 על פי שמות יט, יג.
198 על פי סנהדרין דף מב, ע"א: 'ששים ושמחים לעשות רצון קונם.' פסוק זה נכנס גם לתפילת קידוש החודש.
199 תהלים לד, יא.
200 בראשית א, טו.
201 על פי ישעיהו ד, ו.
202 על פי ישעיהו מ, לט.
203 שופטים ה, ב.
204 במדבר ז, ב.
205 על פי אבות ה, יח.
206 משלי כח, ח.
207 על פי ספרי זוטא (מהדורת חיים שאול הורוויץ, ירושלים, תשכ"ו), כז, יט: ' והעמדת אותו לפני אלעזר הכהן ולפני כל העדה, שיהא מומחה מפי אלעזר הכהן ומפי כל העדה [מלמד שאמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה לך והעמיד תורגמן ליהושע ויהא יושב ודורש ושואל לפניך בראש כל גדולי ישראל:].'
208 מליצה על דרך שמות ל, כג, במקור 'רֹאשׁ מָר דְּרוֹר' עם שיר השירים א, יג: ' צְרוֹר הַמֹּר דּוֹדִי לִי בֵּין שָׁדַי יָלִין.'
209 ישעיהו סג, ט.
210 על פי בראשית כח, יב.
211 אמן, נצח, סלה ועד.
212 מליצה על דרך ירמיהו לג, ו.
213 אסתר א, טו.
214 ירמיהו כג,ו.
215 על פי ירמיהו ד,כ.
216 על פי ישעיהו נא, כ.
217 על פי איוב טז, טז.
218 על פי נחום ב, יא.
219 על פי שמואל א' כה, לא.
220 זכריה יא, ט עם איוב כ, כו.
221 בראשית ה, כט.
222 צפניה ב, ד.
223 על פי תהלים סו, יא.
224 תהלים קה, יח.
225 בראשית לט, כ.

חיל בני אל חי[226] רחמנים, דברו על לב אדוניו ונכנסו עמו בברית כופר נפשו, ואף שהיה מתקשה ומתעלה בדמיו, הרבו עליו הכופר, והפיוס // והפתוי, עד שהתפצר, ונתפתה וחתכו עליו סך כסף די פדיונו , אחר עמל וטורח רב ועצום, לסך פ'[לוני], ושמו מבטחם וכסלם[227] על רחמי ה' , ושי חסדי עבדי ה' וצדקתם, נדיבי עם אלדי אברהם[228] מלמדי מלחמה,[229] מלחמת תורה ומצות, המה יביטו יראו בו, יחליקו שלל[230] נדיבתם לפדיונו, בכל מקום שהם, כמנהגם הטוב. ואנחנו עם היותנו במשעול עול הגלות, והדלות והשפלות, עמוסי התלאות מכל פאות, צרות צרורות תכופות, כצפרים עפות,[231] שואות ומשואות, למשאות נצח[232] ממשא מלך ושרים[233] הצרים אותנו יום יום, אשם גזילות, אשם מעילות,[234] צרות תכופות צפופות. עוד זה מדבר וזה בא,[235] ותפל שב'א,[236] לא יתנונו השב רוחנו[237] אחרי אשר היינו זה שנה למאכלת אש [238] וביזה, ולשלל אש נפלה מן השמים,[239] וכל ביתי ישראל ישרפו את השריפה אשר שרף ה',[240] כמפורסם לכל העולם, שכלו כל בעלי כיס"ין[241] והמתנדבים בעם, איכה יועם זהב,[242] ספו תמו מן בלהות השריפהוהשלל, ואף בכל זאת לא נסוג אחור לבנו, ולא השבנו אחור ימיננו,[243] וידינו דמי"ם
מלאו[244] לנדבת פדיון השבוי הזה, בחור רך וטוב,[245] כל יודעיו ומכיריו יעידון יגידון כלם כאחד, כי מקורו ברוך , וראוי לחנינה, הואיל והשעה הביאתו לידי כך.

Document III

Translation
Epistle 155, pp. 187-88 (published by Benayahu, "Redemption of Captives", in Id., *The Relation Between Greek and Italian Jewry*, pp. 244-46, without a scientific apparatus):

(On a captive in Messina)

You who sit on couches and walk on a paved path[246] to establish the land by the rule of law and rebuild Zion through righteousness[247], cultivated

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226 הושע ב, א.
227 תהלים עח, ז.
228 תהלים מז, י: 'עַם אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם.'
229 שיר השירים ג, ח.
230 מליצה על דרך שופטים ה, ל.
231 ישעיהו לא, ה.
232 תהלים עד, ג.
233 מליצה על דרך הושע ח, י.
234 שמות קרבנות שהיו מועלים בבית המקדש וכאן נזכרים בלשון אירונית,כקרבנות המועלים לשליטי הארץ העוסקים בגזל ומעל.
235 איוב א, טז.
236 כלומר שבאים. איוב א, טו.
237 השווה שו"ת הרד"ך, בית ד ; ר' אליהו ן' חיים, שו"ת (ראנ"ח) (הוצאת יוסף דוב שפיצברג ובנו,ירושלים, תש"ך), סימן פא (נכתב באסתאנבול בסוף המאה השש עשרה): 'יד האומות תקיפה עלינו לא יתנונו השב רוחנו, פעם בענין בית החיים הישן דברי ריבות בשערינו, פעם בענין חקירת השפחות'; שם, סימן פח: ' והאמת שהדבר הזה היה צריך לי תלמוד יותר אלא שטרדות הצבור לא יתנונו השב רוחנו.'
238 ישעיהו ט, ד.
239 על פי איוב א, טז.
240 על פי ויקרא י, ו.
241 כמעט ולא נותרו עשירים.
242 שופטים ה, ט עם איכה ד, א.
243 על פי איכה ב, ג : 'גָּדַע בָּחֳרִי אַף כֹּל קֶרֶן יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵשִׁיב "אָחוֹר" יְמִינוֹ מִפְּנֵי אוֹיֵב.'
244 מליצה על דרך ישעיהו א, טו, בהיפוך משמעות שם דמים במשמעות דם, כאן דמים במשמעות כסף.
245 על פי בראשית יח, ז: 'וְאֶל הַבָּקָר רָץ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח בֶּן בָּקָר רַךְ וָטוֹב וַיִּתֵּן אֶל הַנַּעַר.'
246 Based on Judges 5:10.
247 Based on Proverbs 29:4: "The king by judgment establishes the land: but he that receives gifts overthrows it" (AKJV). The entire verse is an accepted convention in letters from the late medieval period. See *Responsa Rivash,* 79:

like Jerusalem on its hill, these are the noble men[248], the nation of the God of Abraham, the holy seed[249], the precious nation[250], men of lineage and esteem[251], the cornerstones of the holy hosts, those who exalt the Almighty[252] with all-encompassing love[253]. Those who are zealous hasten to perform any holy precept[254], to redeem the captives into prosperity[255]. They will not consider the cost[256]; they will pour out gold from their bags[257] with compassion and mercy. To let the oppressed go free[258], they must verily decide to distribute their abundance with a generous spirit for their glory[259]. They are the noble men, who will always be called the men of great renown[260]. For any particular of the worship of God, may His name be blessed, and the exaltation of His awesome and respected Name, they will be the first to take action[261]. A brave cohort, behold these are mighty men, [eager] to do the will

Isaac bar Sheshet, who loves you loyally, writes through those who sit on rich saddle bags, who travel paved roads, to establish the land by law and rebuild it upon its hill. These are the noble men, who tremble at the word of God, the remnant, the unique individuals, the leaders of the Constantinople community, its elders and judges.

248 Genesis 6:4.

249 Isaiah 6:13.

250 Deuteronomy 14:2.

251 An accepted convention from the early sixteenth century. See Rabbi David Hacohen, *Responsa Radakh* (no publisher listed, Jerusalem, 1968), 1: "They are men of lineage and esteem, for renown and praise".

252 This phrase appears in the daily morning prayers, as part of a twenty-two word poem whose words begin with each letter of the Hebrew alphabet in succession. See also Rabbi Abraham ibn Daud (Ra'avad I), *Sefer ha-emunah ha-ramah* [*The Book of Sublime Faith*], Shimshon ben Leib Weil Edition, Frankfurt am Main, 1853, essay 1, chapter 8: "The cornerstones of the holy hosts, exalters of the Almighty, constantly tell of God's glory and holiness".

253 This expression is quite rare among Spanish and Mizrahi Jews. I first saw it in a liturgical poem by a Jewish poet from the latter half of the ninth century, Amitai ben Shiftaya of Oria, in the Apulia region if Italy. In his poem "afefuni mayim 'ad nafesh" ("The Waters Encompassed Me, Threatening my Life"), the expression "I have loved You with all-encompassing love, pining away for years in exile; despite every torment and hardship, in You alone do I hope". See also H. Shirman, *Mivhar ha-shirah ha-'ivrit be-italia* [*An Anthology of Hebrew Poetry in Italy*], Schocken, Berlin, 1934, pp. 2-3. The expression also appears in the evening prayers of the Sabbath that coincides with intermediate days of Jewish festivals. See *Mahazor Vitry*, no publisher listed, Jerusalem, 1988, 449: "God granted the Sabbath to His people with all-encompassing love, because upon it the great Doer rested". This is an Ashkenazic/Northern European source as well.

254 Based on bPesahim 4a: "Those who are zealous hasten to perform a precept".

255 Based on Psalms 68:7: "God settles the solitary in a home; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land" (ESV).

256 Isaiah 13:17.

257 Ibidem, 46:6.

258 Based on ibidem, 58:6.

259 Based on Psalms 68:13.

260 Genesis 6:4.

261 Based on Exodus 19:13.

of their Creator with all their hearts and all their possessions[262]. And from this day forth, mercifully, He will constantly come to their aid, and from this time on, they will lack no good[263], and He will raise their heads in honor, and they will be like the celestial lights[264] that are available for refuge and for shelter[265], and [He will provide] His might and His aid in times of trouble, in every city and every country. They will not become fatigued nor will they tire[266] when brutal upheavals overtake Israel[267], their faith will give them strength. And, in particular, of their leaders, their elders, their financial pillars and their rich and honorable men, who lead "those that are numbered" [the Israelites][268], to provide merit for the public[269], to show compassion to the poor[270], the unfortunate, we hope for their compassion, we urgently request and ask[271] - of them first - leaders, and first among them a bundle of myrrh[272]. May their portions be in the eternal world, the perfectly wise men [the scholars]. May God bless their might, take them and uplift them all the days of the world[273]. May they ascend the rungs of the ladder that our forefather Jacob dreamed of[274], A.N.S.V.[275].

After offering blessings of abundance, peace, and truth[276], [we must] establish what is to be done[277]. The letters [this epistle is written in] are divine letters chosen to inform and to make audible to the ears of your exalted excellencies, the troubles that this young, impoverished and emaciated man, the bearer of this epistle, has endured. He comes in anticipation of your mighty, wise, and insightful wisdom and insight. His name, for he

262 Based on bSanhedrin 42a: "They are glad and joyful to do the will of their Creator". This passage has also become part of the fixed liturgy for the monthly sanctification of the moon (*qiddush levana*).

263 Psalms 34:11.

264 Genesis 1:15.

265 Based on Isaiah 4:6.

266 Based on ibidem, 40:39.

267 Judges 5:2.

268 Numbers 7:2.

269 Based on mAvot 5:18.

270 Proverbs 28:8.

271 Based on *Sifrei Zuta*, Haim Saul Hurwitz Edition, Jerusalem, 1966, on Leviticus 27:19: "Place him before Elazar the priest and before the entire congregation - his expertise must be [acknowledged by] Elazar the priest and the entire congregation. [This teaches that the Holy One instructed Moses to appoint a spokesman for Joshua, and he will sit, request, and ask of you in the presence of all of Israel's leaders]".

272 A poetic combination of Exodus 30:23 and Song of Songs 1:13.

273 Isaiah 63:9.

274 Based on Genesis 28:12.

275 An acronym standing for "*Amen. Netzah. Selah. Va-'ad*, a well-known concluding phrase. This phrase not only indicates the author's hearty assent, as amen by itself would, but further asserts that nothing can shake his declaration. It stands forever (*netzah*) and ever (*va`ed*)".

276 A play on Jeremiah 33:6.

277 Esther 1:15.

is called X[278], who was suddenly robbed in his tents[279] and taken captive like a bison in a net[280]. Behold, he cries bitterly with a scalded heart for his peace[281], because of his trials at the hands of an uncircumcised, ritually impure, Gentile. How he sighed in the dungeon of his captivity, for he was taken captive by a cruel, merciless enemy from a distant empty wasteland[282]. This land (she) was a stumbling block and offense for the children of Israel[283] and let the fire not blown consume her[284], for great is the conflagration in the city that God has cursed[285], he has prepared it with his anger and his wrath. Set to reign destruction on Israel, the city of Messina was ripe for a blow, and "Ekron shall be uprooted"[286], for there "his [the bearer of the letter's] loins were afflicted"[287] for three years, until God perceived his destitution, and caused it to happen that he came to the city of X [bound] in chains of iron, in the hands of hard masters: his legs were hurt by fetters and he lay in iron[288]. And they placed him in prison, in the place where the king's prisoners are incarcerated[289], and blessed be the Lord who does not deprive his people of a redeemer, his flock of sheep has mighty redeemers, after all [...] him. And he informed our outstanding redeemers, our precious ones, men of valor, sons of the living God[290], merciful ones, to importune his master and establish the ransom necessary to redeem him, and even though he was difficult and raised the price, they increased the ransom and the amount to appease//to tempt him until he finally accepted our pleas and was tempted. So they apportioned an amount of silver that was sufficient to ransom him, after great and onerous labor and travail, in the amount of X and they placed their trust and their hopes[291] in the mercies of God, and in the gifts of God's kind worshippers and their righteousness, the charitable of the people of the God of Abraham[292], those who are versed in the art of war[293] - the battle of studying Torah and performing God's precepts, they will look and see him. They will generously disperse their abundance[294] to ransom him, wherever they may be as is their beneficent custom. And we, who are weighed down by the yoke of exile, and the poverty and the humiliation, encircled by hardships on all sides, frequent troubles and travails, like

278 Jeremiah 23:6.
279 Based on Jeremiah 4:20.
280 Based on Isaiah 51:20.
281 Based on Job 16:16.
282 Based on Nahum 2:11.
283 Based on 1 Samuel 25:31.
284 Zechariah 11:9 and Job 20:26.
285 Genesis 5:29.
286 Zephaniah 2:4.
287 Based on Psalms 66:11.
288 Ibidem, 105:18.
289 Genesis 39:20.
290 Hosea 2:1.
291 Psalms 78:7.
292 Ibidem, 47:10.
293 Song of Songs 3:8.
294 A play on Judges 5:30.

birds that fly[295], devastation and destruction, an unending desolation[296] caused by the burdens of kings and of princes[297] who constrain us every day, a sin offering for theft, a sin offering for misusing sacred property[298], frequent troubles that crowd in upon one another. While one is still speaking another one comes[299] and captors fall upon us[300]. They will not let us catch our breath[301], [even] after we have spent a year ravaged by fire[302] and pillaging, and fire fell from the heavens[303] on our property and all the houses of Israel burned in the conflagration unleashed by God[304]; as the entire world knows, an end has been made of all of those with deep pockets and who are the generous among the people[305]. How has the gold become dim[306]! An end has been made of them by the terrors of the fire and looting. But even so, we will not give up and we will not take a step backwards[307], for our hands are full of money (even though our hands are covered in blood)[308] to contribute to the redemption of this captive, a good, tender young man[309]. All those who know him and are acquainted with him will attest, will speak as one, that his origins are blessed[310] and he deserves mercy, since the history of our time has brought him to this pass.

Document IV

איגרת 164, עמ' 195-196:
(שבוי שהשתחרר מקבץ נדבות לפרעון חובותיו)

אחרת.[311] אצילי אילי [...] יאודה, לתורה ולת[עודה], ... עם... לה' הצדיק צדקות, אהבת השרידים, נגידים

295 Isaiah 31:5.
296 Psalms 74:3.
297 A play on Hosea 8:10.
298 These are names of Temple offerings, but here are mentioned ironically, to refer to offerings made to the rulers of the country, who are engaged in embezzlement and extortion.
299 Job 1:16.
300 A play on Job 1:15, referring here to the lords of the country, the Ottoman rulers of Jerusalem.
301 Cf. *Responsa Radakh,* 4; R. Eliahu Ibn Hayim, *Responsa, Ra'anah*, Yosef Dov Spitzburg & Son Publishing, Jerusalem, 1960, 81 (written in Istanbul at the end of the sixteenth century): "The hand of the nations is strong against us. They will not let us catch our breath. One time it will be matters of dispute about the old cemetery, and another time about the inspection of maidservants"; ibidem, 88: "In truth, this matter requires greater study, but the hassles of the public will not let us catch our breath".
302 Isaiah 9:4.
303 Based on Isaiah 31:5.
304 Based on Leviticus 10:6.
305 Judges 5:9.
306 Lamentations 4:1.
307 Based on Job 2:3.
308 The Hebrew plays on the word "damim" which means both blood and money. Isaiah 1:15 uses this phrase to mean "our hands are covered in blood".
309 Based on Genesis 18:7.
310 I.e., he comes from a good family.
311 כלומר, איגרת אחרת, שונה מקודמתה.

נחמדים, מכל כלי חמדת,[312] עדת ... גבורים לעמוד בפרץ,[313] האתנים מוסדי ארץ,[314] רחמנים בני רחמנים,[315] גומלי חסדים בני גומלי חסדים,[316] מוסדי עמודי שמים וארץ, מצדיקי הרבים ככוכבים לעולם ועד,[317] מאירים ומזהירים לארץ ולדרים[318] הלא המה סלות [319] קהלות, תהלות ישראל, [אשר בכ]ל עיר ועיר מדינה ומדינה, מקום אשר דבר המלך[320] מלכו של עולם מגיע , אוהבי צדקה וחסד, להם לשמחה וטוב לבב מעל ראשיהם מלמעלה, לשם ולתהלה, לכבוד ולתפארת,[321] עטרת החכמים השלמים יצ"ו ,[322] פרנסיהם ומנהיגיהם, פנת, יקרת, הדרת שופטיהם, ה' עליהם, יחיו מעתה ועד עולם,[323] ויהי שלום בחילם,[324] אמן.

זה עני קרא חשוב כמת[325] מלב נשבר ונדכה, שבר על שבר,[326] גבר אשר לא יצלח לכל מלאכה,[327] כי נשבר ונשבה ביד זרים אכזרים, השקוהו ממרורים, מי המרים המאררים,[328] הלא הוא שמו פ'[לוני], קרא בנפש מרה כלענה[329] [...] דמעה, ועפעפיו יזלו מים,[330] רבים מכאובים לו, סר צלו ,[331] שפכו עליו סוללה,[332] רוחו חובלה,[333] ונפשו נבהלה מאד,[334] ואזרועו מקנה תשבר,[335] ואינו שולט בה ליהנות מיגיעו, להטריף טרף ביתו[336] וכו, עתו מבעתו,[337] כי איככה יוכל לראות ברעה[338] אשר ימצא לצאצאי מעיו[339] נרתחו, נרפים הם נרפים ,[340] מתעטפים ברעב ובצמא ובחוסר כל ,[341] הן כל התלאה, שאה ומשואה,[342] אשר עולל לו הזמן, בלתי נאמן,[343] להעמיס עליו יום יום כובד מעמס, לשומו מ[...], ולבבו בקרבו המס ימס כרגע מפני אש להבת

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[312] על פי דברי הימים ב' לו, י.

[313] על פי יחזקאל כב, ל: 'וָאֲבַקֵּשׁ מֵהֶם אִישׁ גֹּדֵר גָּדֵר וְעֹמֵד בַּפֶּרֶץ לְפָנַי בְּעַד הָאָרֶץ לְבִלְתִּי שַׁחֲתָהּ וְלֹא מָצָאתִי.'

[314] מיכה ו, ב.

[315] ספר החינוך (מכון ירושלים, ירושלים, תשנ"ב), מצווה מב, ג.

[316] יבמות, דף עט, ע"א.

[317] דניאל יב, ג.

[318] סדר רב עמרם גאון (מהדורת גרשום הרפנס, בני ברק, תשנ"ד), קריאת שמע וברכותיה : 'ופותח שליח צבור ואומר ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם יוצר אור ובורא חושך עושה שלום ובורא את הכל. המאיר לארץ ולדרים עליה ברחמים.'

[319] מלשון סולת.

[320] אסתר ד, ג.

[321] ירמיהו יג ,יא. מבנה פואטי על פי שמות כח, ב ודברים כו,יט,וראה גם

[322] ישמרם צורם ויגאלם.

[323] מופיע פעמים רבות במקרא , למשל תהלים קלא, ג.

[324] על פי תהלים קכב, ז: 'יְהִי שָׁלוֹם בְּחֵילֵךְ שַׁלְוָה בְּאַרְמְנוֹתָיִךְ.'

[325] ילקוט שמעוני (שמעון אשכנזי, פרנקפורט ע"נ מיין תמ"ז (,תהלים, רמז תתלא: 'מאי מיתה עניות דאמר מר עני חשוב כמת.'

[326] על פי ירמיהו ד, כ: 'שֶׁבֶר עַל שֶׁבֶר נִקְרָא כִּי שֻׁדְּדָה כָּל הָאָרֶץ פִּתְאֹם שֻׁדְּדוּ אֹהָלַי רֶגַע יְרִיעֹתָי.'

[327] על פי ירמיהו כב, ל: 'כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה כִּתְבוּ אֶת הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה עֲרִירִי גֶּבֶר "לֹא יִצְלַח" בְּיָמָיו כִּי לֹא יִצְלַח מִזַּרְעוֹ אִישׁ יֹשֵׁב עַל כִּסֵּא דָוִד וּמֹשֵׁל עוֹד בִּיהוּדָה.'

[328] במדבר ה, יח.

[329] משלי ה, ד.

[330] על פי ירמיהו ט, יז.

[331] על פי במדבר יד,ט. על פי המסורת הקבלית כאשר מגיעה שעת מותו של האדם סר צילו מעליו. ראה ר' בחיי בן אשר, ביאור על התורה (יצחק בן אהרן מפרוסטיץ, קראקא, שצ"ב),פרשת שלח לך, דף קעה,ע"ב: 'כי צילו של אדם מורה על הויתו בעולמו ובמקומו,וכאשר יחסר צלו של אדם בליל החתימה,הנה זה אות וסימן בהעדר צלו שהויתו נעדרת מחיי עולם השפל'.

[332] על פי יחזקאל כא,כב.

[333] על פי איוב יז, א : 'רוּחִי חֻבָּלָה יָמַי נִזְעָכוּ קְבָרִים לִי.'

[334] על פי תהלים ו, ד.

[335] איוב לא, כב.

[336] על פי משלי לא, טו: 'וַתָּקָם בְּעוֹד לַיְלָה וַתִּתֵּן טֶרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ וְחֹק לְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ.'

[337] הזמן, מצבו בעת הזאת, מבעית אותו.

[338] פראפראזה על אסתר ח, ו.

[339] כלומר ילדיו.

[340] על פי שמות ה, ח: 'וְאֶת מַתְכֹּנֶת הַלְּבֵנִים אֲשֶׁר הֵם עֹשִׂים תְּמוֹל שִׁלְשֹׁם תָּשִׂימוּ עֲלֵיהֶם לֹא תִגְרְעוּ מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי נִרְפִּים הֵם עַל כֵּן הֵם צֹעֲקִים לֵאמֹר נֵלְכָה נִזְבְּחָה לֵאלֹהֵינוּ.'

[341] פאראפראזה על דברים כח,מח.

[342] צפניה א, טו.

[343] מוטיב הזמן הבוגדני שכיח רבות בשירת ספרד של ימי הביניים. הביטוי כלשונו נמצא גם בספר מקור חיים (ליוורנו תקנ"ד) לר' שמואל בן חיים ויטאל (דמשק 1598-1677), בהקדמת המחבר.

שלהבת הצרות, חברת אשה אל אחתה [344] אשר השתרגו עלו על צוארו[345] כלו בשרו ועורו, ראתה עיננו,[346] שמעה אזננו ותבן לה, צרת מרת רוחו, רוח נשברה,[347] ואף גם זאת, כי אנחנו עמוסי התלאות, חולפות ובאות עלינו תמיד, נכמרו רחמנו עליו, ועשינו עמו כיד ה' הטובה עלינו.

אי לזאת, שלמי אמוני ישראל,[348] רדפי צדק,[349] מחזיקי כל בדק, זה חסדכם הגדול מעל שמים, נתון תתנו לו די מחסורו אשר יחסר לו. ואשריו ואשרי חלקו , המעניקו מעדני צדקתו ומיקבי חסדו, והפותח ידו// בכל מאודו לתת לו מנה יפה, יפתח לו ה' את אוצרו הטוב, ופועל ידו רצה, ובנאות דשא ירביצהו ינחהו במעגלי צדק למען שמו,[350] ואל נא תאחרו אותו , ילך וישוב אל ביתו, כמסת נדבת ידכם המלאה והרחבה[351] ,כדרככם דרך צדק יקראו לה, ומה' תהיה משכורתכם שלמה, ולכולנו יחשב לחן ולחסד ולרחמים, ואל שדי יתן לכם [...][...], ויתן ויחזור ויתן ברכה ערוכה בכל משלח ידכם, כנפשכם הרמה והנשאה, המלאה חכמה ודעת ויראת ה' וכנפש אחיכם, נאמני [...] איה, גבורת אהבת עולם, דורשי שלום יקר תפארת גדולתכם, כל היראים בלב תמים, צעירי הצאן החות'[מים] פ'[לוני], והעני עדיו בגופו ובמראה פניו זכין לו, ומצוה גדולה לסייעו כ'[ולי].

Document IV

Translation
Epistle 164, pp. 195-96:

(A released captive collects donations to repay his debts)

Another one[352]. the nobles and lords of Judea for the Law and for testimony … a nation … for God, the righteous One who performs righteous acts, the love of the remnant, agreeable men of influence, out of all the goodly vessels[353], the congregation of … Noble men who stand in the breach[354], the mighty ones, the foundations of the earth[355], merciful ones the offspring of merciful ones[356], purveyors of loving-kindness the progeny of purveyors of loving-kindness[357], the foundations, the pillars of the heavens and the earth, those who perform righteous acts on behalf of the public, like stars that eternally illumine[358] and shine upon the earth and its inhabitants[359], for are they not the best[360] of their communities, the

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[344] שמות כו, ג.

[345] על פי איכה א, יד.

[346] תהלים לה, כא.

[347] תהלים נא, יט.

[348] שמואל ב' כ, יט.

[349] ישעיהו נא, א.

[350] על פי תהלים פרק כג, ב-ג: 'בִּנְאוֹת דֶּשֶׁא יַרְבִּיצֵנִי עַל מֵי מְנֻחוֹת יְנַהֲלֵנִי: (ג) נַפְשִׁי יְשׁוֹבֵב יַנְחֵנִי בְמַעְגְּלֵי צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ.'

[351] על פי ברכת המזון.

[352] That is to say, another epistle.

[353] Based on 2 Chronicles 36:10.

[354] Based on Ezekiel 22:3.

[355] Micah 6:2.

[356] *Sefer ha-hinukh* [*The Book of Education*], Makhon Yerushalayim, Jerusalem, 1992, 42:3.

[357] bYevamot 79a.

[358] Daniel 12:3.

[359] *Seder Rabbi ʻAmram Ga'on.* Gershom Harpenes Edition, Bnei Brak, 1994. This phrase appears at the beginning of the first of three blessings recited in weekday morning prayers along with the *Shema*` declaration.

[360] Lit. "the finest flour".

praise of Israel who [dwell] in every city and every country, every place the word of the King[361], the King of the World, reaches, for the lovers of righteousness and loving-kindness it brings joy and happiness to them, [raising them] above their heads for the renown and the praise, the honor and the glory[362], the crown of the wholly wise men, may our Rock protect them and save them, their financial pillars, and their leaders, the precious cornerstone that glorifies their judges, may God [shed his countenance] upon them and may they live from now on and forever more[363], and may there be peace in their fortresses[364]. Amen.

This poor man is calling out[365], he who is considered like one dead from a broken and oppressed heart, break upon break[366], who is unable to perform any labor[367] for he has been broken and held captive by cruel strangers. He was given to drink from the bitter, accursed waters[368]. Is his name not X? He calls out from [the depths of] a bitter soul likened to wormwood[369] [...] tears and copious waters leak from under his eyelids[370]. He is in great pain. His shadow has disappeared[371]. They have raised earthworks[372]. His spirit has been bruised[373] and his soul most affrighted[374]. And his arm is broken from the stem[375], so he does not control it, nor can he benefit from his labor to hunt prey for his family[376], etc. His prospects terrify him for how could he endure seeing the evil that has overtaken his progeny[377]. His innards have been boiled, they are weakened, languorous, overcome by starvation and thirst and the lack of all[378].

[361] Esther 4:3.
[362] A poetic combination of Exodus 28:2 and Deuteronomy 26:19. See also Jeremiah 13:11.
[363] Appears frequently in the Bible, for example Psalms 131:3.
[364] Based on Psalms 122:7.
[365] Based on Psalms 34:7 as well as *Yalkut Shim'oni*, Shimon Ashkenazi, Frankfurt am Main, 1687, Psalms, 831: "What is death? Poverty. For the master has taught: A pauper is like a dead man".
[366] Based on Jeremiah 4:20 and alludes to the pillage suffered by the bearer of the letter.
[367] Based on Jeremiah 22:30.
[368] Numbers 5:18.
[369] Proverbs 5:4.
[370] Based on Jeremiah 9:17.
[371] Based on Numbers 14:9. According to kabbalistic tradition, when a person's time to die comes, his shadow disappears. See Rabbi Bahya ben Asher, *Be'ur 'al hatorah* [*Commentary on the Torah*], Yitzhak ben Aharon of Prostitz, Krakow, 1732, on Numbers 14:9 (p. 178b in the edition): "A person's shadow attests to his existence in his world and place. And when one's shadow goes missing on the night his fate is sealed, it is a signal and sign that his existence has disappeared from life in the lower world".
[372] Ezekiel 21:22.
[373] Based on Job 17:1.
[374] Psalms 6:4.
[375] Job 31:22.
[376] Based on Proverbs 31:15.
[377] A paraphrase of Esther 8:6.
[378] A paraphrase of Deuteronomy 28:48.

Disloyal time[379] has placed on him all [types of] hardship and burden has loaded him down daily with a crushing weight[380] to desolate him from [...] and his heart has verily melted at this moment because of the fire, the tongue of fire, the flame of the tribulations band together [as one][381] for they have almost engulfed him[382]. His flesh and his skin have dissolved. Our eyes have seen this[383]. Our ears have heard this. And we understand the distress, the bitterness of his spirit. His spirit is broken[384]. And even though we are also burdened by hardships that are incessantly visited upon us, our pity is extended to him and we have done for him as the hand of the Lord has been good to us.

And is it not for this reason, faithful believers of Israel[385], those who pursue justice[386] and repair all the breaches, this is your great kindness that reaches beyond the heavens: Verily endow him with all that he is lacking and may he be happy and may the lot of the one who grants him [from] the delicacies of his righteousness and from the vineyards of his kindness and opens his hand [in generosity] be a happy one//of all his possessions to give him a generous portion. May the Lord open his goodly treasury for him and be pleased with his labors and make him lie down in green pastures and lead him in the paths of righteousness for the sake of His name[387]. And do not delay him. Let him go and return to his house loaded down by the burden of your generosity, which is of a full measure and exceedingly great, as is your way[388]. The path of righteousness it shall be called. And may you be fully recompensed by God and may this be considered for all of us [an act deserving of God's future] compassion and kindness and mercy. And may the Lord, God give you [...] and He will give and He will return and give a set blessing upon all the works of your hands as befits your exalted and elevated selves, full of wisdom and knowledge and awe of the Lord, and like your brethren the faithful of [...] where is the boldness of the Beloved of the world, those who inquire about the welfare of the honorable glory of your grandeur[389]? All those who stand in awe with an upright heart, the young of the flock, who affixed their signatures here, and the poor man, whose body is his witness and his countenance brings him merit, it is a tremendous religious obligation to aid him, etc.

[379] The motif of the treacherous time is prevalent in Medieval Jewish poetry in Spain. The exact expression can be seen in the book *Meqor Hayim* (Livorno 1794) of Shemuel ben Hayim Vital from Damascus (1598-1677), in the author's introduction.
[380] Zephaniah 1:15.
[381] Exodus 26:3.
[382] Based on Lamentations 1:14.
[383] Psalms 35:21.
[384] Psalms 51:19.
[385] 2 Samuel 20:19.
[386] Isaiah 51:1.
[387] Based on Psalms 23:2-3: "He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters; He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths, for His name's sake" (NIV).
[388] Paraphrase on Birkat ha-Mazon (Grace after meals).
[389] Based on Esther 1:4.

Document V

איגרת 196, עמ' 231-232 (נתפרסמה ללא אפראט מדעי על ידי ש. אסף , "לתולדות היהודים באי מאלטה", הנ"ל, באהלי יעקב [מוסד הרב קוק, ירושלים,תש"ג], עמ' 111):
מליצה לשבוי

זרע קדש, מטע ה' להתפאר,[390] בחירי סגולה, גומלי חסד כלם, בהונם בממונם, כלם אהובים, כלם ברוכים, עושים מאהבה, הנה הנם הקהלות הקדושות שבכל עיר ועיר, יהיו עולם לפני אלד'ים,[391] אמן, ואחריהם כל ישרי לב, גבירים כבירים, פרנסים ממונים, ועבודת הקדש על כתף ישאו, ה' עליהם, יחיו, אמן, ועטרותיהם על ראשיהם[392] מלמעלה, לצבי ולכבוד,[393] מרביצי תורה בישראל, החכמים השלמים, יאריכו ימים על ממלכתם בהשקט ובבטחה.[394]
לשלום אין קץ אותותנו אלה לדבר בצדקה, על אודות המוביל הלזה, עני משוע [395] פ'[לוני], שנלכד בבור, שבוי זה כמה שנים באי מלטה, ענו בכבל רגלו,[396] במשא כובד אבן, גם שם לא הונח לו,[397] ויריצוהו מן הבור, וישבוהו באניות בעניות[398] בלב ימים, כתרוהו הדריכוהו מנמל לנמל, הקיפוהו בלהות וימי הרעה.[399] במקל ורצועה הכוהו פצעוהו, פצע וחבורה. והשיבו את לחמו במשקל דמים במשורה. ומרוב בכיתו כהו עיניו מראות. ולא היה יודע איזה הדרך ישכון אור.[400] והיו מלעיבים ומלעיגים עליו בני הערלים, ורוגמים אותו אבן, ובדברים מאוסים ותעלולים משלו בו בחירופין וגידופין, ונשתנו עליו כל סדרי בראשית מכל השבויים אשר היו לפניו,[401] אשר על כן , שאר השבויים נכנסו בעובי הפרעון לאדונו, ושלח אותו פה ביד גוי, והוצרכנו לפרוע כך וכך, והנה זה העני בצאתו מעירו, יצא לשם נדר לעלות לארץ הצבי, ונלכד בשביה, ואין כל מאומה בידו, ונוסף על זה היותו איש מטופל, והגיעו בנותיו לפרקן, והוא לא ידע על איזה מהם יתבע, ועל איזה מהם יתחנן לפני כת'ר,[402] לכן אליכהם[!] המצוה הזאת הכהנים , בכל מקום אשר תדרוך כף רגלו, להעניקו מיקבי וגורן צדקתכם, ותפתחו לו פתחי נדבה, ותתנו לו מהלכים אל אשר שמה הרוח ללכת, עד אשר ישוב עירו, ובכל אשר יפנה, ישא דגל תכלת מעכת[403] ויברך אתכם, ואל תהי ברכת הדיוט קלה[404] בעיני כתר',[405] ומן השמים תתברכו בריוח והצלה כנפשם וכ'[ולי].
זה האיש ירא את ה', הוא מבקש עליו, הרג כל היום ,ומבור השבי יצא רגלו ,והנו עובר לפניכם במקלו ותרמילו, כי כן גרם לו רו"ע מזלו, גד גדי וסנוק לו[406] ועל כן דרש מאתנו לחלות פני כתר,[407] שיתו לבבכם לחילו, והפק

390 על פי ישעיהו ס,כא.
391 מליצה בהיפוך משמעות על אסתר ח, יא: 'אֲשֶׁר נָתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ לַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל עִיר וָעִיר לְהִקָּהֵל וְלַעֲמֹד עַל נַפְשָׁם לְהַשְׁמִיד וְלַהֲרֹג וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת כָּל חֵיל עַם וּמְדִינָה הַצָּרִים אֹתָם טַף וְנָשִׁים וּשְׁלָלָם לָבוֹז.'
392 על פי ברכות דף יז, ע"א :'צדיקים יושבין ועטרותיהם בראשיהם ונהנים מזיו השכינה'.
393 ישעיהו ד, ב.
394 ישעיהו ל, טו.
395 איוב כט, יב.
396 תהלים קה, יח.
397 על פי איכה ה: ה.
398 לשון נופל על לשון עניות-אניות.
399 על פי קהלת פרק יב, א : 'וּזְכֹר אֶת בּוֹרְאֶיךָ בִּימֵי בְּחוּרֹתֶיךָ עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָבֹאוּ יְמֵי הָרָעָה וְהִגִּיעוּ שָׁנִים אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר אֵין לִי בָהֶם חֵפֶץ'.
400 'אֵי זֶה הַדֶּרֶךְ יִשְׁכָּן אוֹר וְחֹשֶׁךְ אֵי זֶה מְקֹמוֹ'. : על פי איוב לח, יט
401 כלומר, שוביו נהגו בו באכזריות יותר מאשר כל שבוי שהיה לפניו.
402 כבוד תורתכם.
403 ראשי תיבות: מעלת כבוד תורתכם.
404 מגילה ,דף טו, ע"א.
405 כבוד תורתכם.
406 רש"י מסכת שבת דף סז, ע"ב: 'האומר גד גדי - התמזל מזלי. וסנוק לא - עיף אל תהי. אשכי ובושכי - יום ולילה.יש בו משום דרכי האמורי - וכן בכולן עד סוף פירקא גרסינן: הרי זה מדרכי האמורי, והכי גרסינן בתוספתא.הוא בשמה והיא בשמו - הוא ואשתו מחליפין שמותיהן זה בזה בלילה, משום ניחוש'.
407 כבוד תורתכם.

תפיקו משאלו, ושול תשולו לו[408] עד יהיה פתו מצויה בסלו, ונתקו מוסרות מוטות עול על סובלו, ונשמע קולו ברמה לאמר, פקד ה' את עמו, ושבו בנים לגבולם[409] ואיש על דגלו.[410]

Document V

Translation
Epistle 196, pp. 231-32 (Published by Assaf, "More on the History of the Jews in the Island of Malta", in Id., *In the Tents of Jacob*, p. 111, without a scientific apparatus):

An Intercession for a Captive

Sacred seed, the orchard of the Lord in which to glorify Himself[411], the chosen of the chosen people, all of them purveyors of loving-kindness with their wealth and their fortunes, all of them beloved and blessed, acting out of love. Behold, they are the holy communities that are found in every city, may they always appear before the Lord[412], Amen. And after them, all the men of integrity, mighty nobles, financial pillars, appointed ones. May they carry the holy work on their shoulders. May God dwell among them. Amen. And may their crowns be on their heads above them[413] to indicate their splendor[414], and may honor come to those who disseminate the Torah in Israel, the perfect sages. May they merit length of days [presiding] over their domains in tranquility and safety[415].

To peace there is no end, our letters come to speak about charity, about the bearer of this letter, an atrociously poor individual[416], X who was trapped in the dungeon of his captivity for several years on the isles of Malta. They tortured his leg with fetters[417] attached to a heavy stone burden. And, even after doing this, they did not leave him alone; rather, they hurried him out of the dungeon[418] and placed him on the ships, in great penury[419], in the midst of the sea. They closed in around him and led him from harbor

408 רות רבה (וילנה, תרל"ח ; מהדורת מירון ביאליק לרנר, ירושלים, תשל"א,), פרשה ה, ז [טו].
409 ירמיהו לא, טז.
410 במדבר א, נב.

411 Based on Isaiah 60:21.
412 An inverted phraseology on Esther 8:11: "Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey" (KJV).
413 Based on bBerakhot 17a: "The righteous sit, with their crowns on their heads, enjoying the glow of the Divine presence".
414 Isaiah 4:2.
415 Isaiah 30:15.
416 Job 29:12.
417 Psalms 105:18.
418 Based on Lamentations 5:5.
419 There is a play on words here between "*oniyot*" (ships) and "*aniyut*" (penury).

to harbor. They encompassed him with terrors and evil days[420]. With clubs and whips they beat him, dealt him wounds and contusions and returned his bread by the weight of blood, in measure, and due to the extent of his weeping he lost his eyesight, and he did not know in what direction the light might shine[421]. And the uncircumcised men would insult him and mock him and pelt him with stones and with disgusting objects. And the trickery overmastered him, accompanied by cursing and blasphemy, and they [his captors] turned the very order of creation upside down, behaving towards him in a fashion that they had never acted towards another captive. Therefore, all the other captives took upon themselves the full debt to his master, and the master sent him here accompanied by a non-Jew, and we were obliged to pay such-and-such a sum. And behold this poor man left his hometown in order to fulfill a vow to ascend to the Holy Land, but he was taken captive and he does not have any possessions at all. And furthermore, since he has children, and his daughters have reached marriageable age and he does not know for which of them he should claim [a dowry] and which of them he should beg [a dowry], he turns to you whose knowledge of Torah does you honor. This good deed, therefore, falls upon you, the priests, in every place where his footsteps fall, to give him from the vineyards and granaries of your righteousness and open for him the gateways of generosity and grant him access to the way in which he should go until he returns to his city. And everywhere he goes he should display an azure clothe, the sign of your excellency. And he will bless you. And may the blessing of a common person not be inconsequential[422] in the eyes of one whose knowledge of Torah does him honor, for from the heavens will you be blessed with relief and salvation as you provided for them etc.

This is the man who fears the Lord. He pleads for himself, since he should be considered as one being murdered all day long. For he has left the pit of his captivity, and he his passing among you with his staff and his pack for his evil fortune has caused this, [he said] “Be lucky my luck and tire not”[423]. Therefore, he has asked us to implore before you whose knowledge of Torah does you honor. Consider well his feebleness and verily respond to his request. Verily lend to him until[424] he has bread in his basket and the reins and the rods of the yoke have been severed because of his suffering. And his voice will be heard in the hilly region saying God has remembered his nation and his children have returned to their borders[425], each man to his tribe[426].

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420 Based on Ecclesiastes 12: “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw near, when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them” (AKJV).

421 Based on Job 38:19: “Where is the way where light dwells? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof?” (AKJV).

422 bMegillah 15a.

423 According to bShabbat 67b reciting this passage falls under the proscribed category of the ways of the Emorites. The present translation is based on Rashi’s commentary to this difficult Aramaic passage.

424 Ruth 2:16. See also *Ruth Rabbah*, Vilna, 1878; Miron Bialik Lerner Edition, Jerusalem, 1971, *ad loc.*

425 Jeremiah 31:16.

426 Numbers 1:52.

Document VI

איגרת 197, כ"י ירושלים, עמ' 232-233
(גביר משאלוניקי נשבה פעמיים ,ומחזר על הפתחים לפדיון משפחתו שנשארה ביד אבירי מאלטה)

חמדת עדת אבירים כבירים, גבורים מוכתרים בכמה כתרים, וכתר שם טוב עולה על גדירם,[427] יראה להם וגובה להם, ופניהם איש אל אחיו יאמר חזק ,[428] לעשות חסד וצדקה ולהשביע נפש שוקקה,[429] המה הגברים אשר מעולם, אנשי השם[430] שבקהלות תהלות ישראל אשר בכל מדינה ומדינה, מקום אשר דבר המלך הקדוש ודתו מגיע,[431] וגביריהם, שריהם, ויועציהם ופרנסיהם, ועטרותיהם בראשיהם,[432] צנתרות הזהב,[433] המארת הגדלים,[434] הרבנים האיתנים, מוסדי עולם, עמודי שמים[435] וכ'[ו].
אחרי עתרת החיים והשלום כמשפט לאהבי שם תפארת גדולתם, הנה עיני קדשכם תחזינה מישרים,[436] דברים המרים, הנאמרים באמת בכתבים אשר ביד האיש הלזה מרבני קושטנטינה[437] וכ'[ו],
שם יתנו תאניה ואניה,[438] מאשר חלפו צפו על ראש הלזה מוביל כתבא דנא,[439] ההולך קדמת מחניכם קדוש, ושמו פ'[לוני], אשר נודע לנו היותו מגבירי שאלוניקי ואצליה, מהנה לרבים מנכסיו, ויהי כאשר אותה נפשו לעלות לחזות בנועם ה' להשתטח על קברות הצדיקים אשר בירושלם ובארצנו, דרך אניה בלב ים,[440] פגעו בו שבאים ושבו אותו ואת ביתו, ובחמלת ה' עליו נפדה מנכסיו, ואח"כ [ואחר כך] פגעו בהם פעם שניה ושבאום פעם אחרת והוליכום למאלטה, ופסקו בעד פדיון נפשם סך רב, והניח את אשתו ובניו שם, ופנה אל הסובב לגבות פדיון נפשם. ובבאו פה עירנו, עם היותנו עמוסי התלאות והרעות, שבר על השברים ותרועות,[441] בכל זאת התאפקנו להחזיק בידו מן הבא בידנו, כי המו נכמרו מעי רחמנו אליו. ולכן אתם כהני ה' תקראו,[442] בכל מקום אשר יבא שמה, פתחו לו שערי צדק[443] במנה יפה נשקפה כמו שחר[444] לפי כבודו, כי כביר מצאה ידו,[445] ולאו כל שעתא מתרמי[446] אדם הגון וראוי מבני עליה כזה אשר הכרת פניו ענתה בו, ולכן אשרי אנוש יעשה זאת, ובן אדם יחזיק בו,[447] ותיקר נא נפשו ונפש המיחלים לחסדו בעיני תפארת גדולתכם, להתיר לו פסת יד ביתר שאת, לקרא לשבוים דרור ולאסירים פקח קוח[448] בימין צדקתכם הנאדרי בכח,[449] ובגלל // הדבר הזה,

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427 על פי אבות ד, יג: [יד] 'רבי יהודה אומר הוי זהיר בתלמוד ששגגת תלמוד עולה זדון רבי שמעון אומר שלשה כתרים הם כתר תורה וכתר כהונה וכתר מלכות וכתר שם טוב עולה על גביהן.'

428 מבוסס על ישעיהו מא,ו ,וראה אלשיך, פירוש על התורה, תורת משה , בראשית לג ד"ה ויאמר נסעה....'אין לאדום שליטה על ישראל. והנה אמר עשו הנה מעתה נסעה יחד בשותפות כמו שאמרו ז"ל (שם) על פסוק שאחר זה בקש היות לו שותפות עמו. אלא שאמרו בעולמו של יעקב, ולפי דרכנו במדרש הנזכר הוא נסעה יחד בשותפות בעולם הזה, ונלכה כי יהיה לנו התהלכות וקיום כי איש אל אחיו יאמר חזק'.

429 על פי תהלים קז, ט.

430 על פי בראשית ו, ד.

431 על פי אסתר ד, ג.

432 על פי ברכות דף יז, ע"א: 'צדיקים יושבין ועטרותיהם בראשיהם ונהנים מזיו השכינה'.

433 על פי זכריה ד, יב

434 על פי בראשית א, טז.

435 על פי איוב כו,יא עם אלשיך ,ספר רוממות אל, פירוש על תהלים י ד"ה (יא) :'אמר...אנשים צדיקים מוסדי עולם'.

436 על פי תהלים יז, ב.

437 אסתאנבול.

438 על פי ישעיהו כט, ב.

439 מוליך כתב זה.

440 על פי משלי ל, יט.

441 על פי תוספות מסכת ראש השנה דף לג עמוד ב: 'תקיעות שברים תרועות'.

442 על פי ישעיהו סא, ו

443 על פי תהליםקיח, יט.

444 על פי שיר השירים ו, י.

445 על פי איוב לא, כה.

446 לא בכל שעה מזדמן.

447 על פי ישעיהו נו, ב.

448 על פי ישעיהו סא, א, ושם אסורים ולא אסירים.

449 על פי שמות טו, ו: 'יְמִינְךָ אֲדֹנָי נֶאְדָּרִי בַּכֹּחַ יְמִינְךָ אֲדֹנָי תִּרְעַץ אוֹיֵב'.

הנה אלד'ינו זה קוינו ויושיענו, יושיעכם תשועת עולמים, יריק לכם ברכה עד בלי די, וימלאו אסמיכם, יאריך ימיכם בטוב, ושנותכם בנעימים, ואל שדי יתן לכם רחמים[450].

Document VI

Translation
Epistle 197, pp. 232-33:

(A Salonikan, once a wealthy man,twice captured, collecting alms in order to redeem his family held by the Knights of Malta)

The beloved of the congregation, the lordly men, the mighty men, crowned with several crowns, and the crown of a good name outweighs them all[451]. They possess reverence and they are elevated [above other men], and they face one another and say "be strong"[452] to perform acts of loving-kindness and charity, to satisfy every desirous soul[453]. These are the noble men for ever and ever, the men of renown[454] among the communities, the praise of Israel, found in each and every country, the places to which the King's holy words and laws reach[455], and their lordly men, their princes, their advisors, their financial pillars, with their crowns on their heads[456], the wealthy men with lineage[457], the great celestial lights[458], the mighty rabbis, the foundations of the world, the pillars of the heavens[459], etc.

After [offering a blessing of] abundance, life, and peace, as is the law for those whose love of Shem is the glory of their greatness[460], behold

[450] על פי בראשית מג, יד.

[451] Based on mAvot 4:13: "Rabbi Yehuda said: Be careful when teaching, for your errors in teaching are considered as intentional transgression. Rabbi Shimon said: There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood and the crown of the monarchy - but the crown of a good name outweighs them all".

[452] Based on Isaiah 41:6. Alshekh, *Commentary on the Torah: Torat Mosheh* on Genesis 34, s.v. "va-yomer nis'ah":

> [The nation of] Edom has no control over Israel. Thus, Esau said "From now on, let us travel together, as partners", as the rabbis commented on the next verse, that [Esau] wished to have a partnership with [Jacob]. But they said it about Jacob's world. According to our approach to the aforementioned midrash, [he suggested] that they travel together as partners in this world, and by going together they would endure, for each man would say "be strong" to his brother.

[453] Based on Psalms 107:9.

[454] Based on Genesis 6:4.

[455] Based on Esther 4:3.

[456] Based on bBerakhot 17a: "The righteous sit, with their crowns on their heads, enjoying the glow of the Divine presence".

[457] Literally, "golden spouts". Based on Zechariah 4:15.

[458] Based on Genesis 1:16.

[459] Based on Job 26:11 and Alshekh, *Exaltations of God: Commentary on Psalms*, 10:11: "… righteous men are the foundations of the world".

[460] The word for name in Hebrew is "*shem*", but this was also the ancestral name of Noah's son, the father of all the Semitic nations. Thus, the author plays with this homonym in order to express his wishes for the addressee.

let your holy eyes look without averting their gaze[461] at the bitter tidings that are contained in these epistles that are borne by this man, one of Constantinople's[462] rabbis etc. These will give expression to the sorrow and sighing[463] for what has happened to this man who has been veritably submerged under water, the bearer of this letter, who sojourns before your holy encampments for his name is X, who is known to us as one of the wealthy and noble men from Salonika, who gave joy to many with his possessions. For when his soul desired to ascend and see the pleasantness of God, to prostrate on the graves of the righteous men in Jerusalem and throughout our country, he took ship and in the midst of the sea[464] captors attacked him and took him and his household prisoners, but with God's mercy he redeemed himself with his wealth and went free. Afterwards, however, they were attacked a second time and they were taken captive on another occasion and brought to Malta, and their masters demanded an exorbitant sum for their ransom. So, he left his wife and children there, and turned to the surrounding [communities] to collect their ransom. And when he came here, to our city, even though we were burdened by hardships and evils, crises on top of crises and the trumpets of war[465], we still spent less ourselves in order to strengthen his hands with whatever came to our possession, for our very innards sigh and flow with pity for him. And, therefore, you shall be called the priests of the Lord[466]; in every place that he arrives, open the gates of righteousness[467] with great generosity, looking out like the dawn[468] in accord with his honor, his hand has gotten much[469]. It is not every day that one encounters a decent and deserving man, one of elevated standing, like him, whose very face vouches for him. And, therefore, happy is the man who can do this, and [happy is the man] who can strengthen him[470]. So may he and those who wish him well be held in esteem in the your eyes, to open your palm to him as quickly as possible, to proclaim liberty for the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound[471] with your righteous right hand, those who are so glorious with power[472]. And [as recompense] for this act, behold here is our Lord whom we have hoped for and he will save us. May He save you forever and ever. May he pour his blessings over you without end, and

[461] Based on Psalms 17:2.

[462] Istanbul.

[463] Based on Isaiah 29:2.

[464] Based on Proverbs 30:19.

[465] A play on the different types of blasts, *shevarim* and *teru'ot*, sounded on a ram's horn (*shofar*) on the Jewish new year (Rosh Ha-Shana). Cf. the comments of the Tosafists on bRosh Ha-Shana 33b, s.v. "teqi'ot shevarim teru'ot".

[466] Based on Isaiah 61:6.

[467] Based on Psalms 118:19.

[468] Based on Song of Songs 6:10.

[469] Based on Job 31:25.

[470] Based on Isaiah 56:2.

[471] Based on ibidem, 61:1.

[472] Based on Exodus 15:5: "Your right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: your right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy" (AKJV).

may your granaries be full. May your live long and well. May your years be pleasant, and may the Lord our God grant you mercy[473].

Document VII

איגרת 202, עמ' 234 (פורסמה בחלקה על ידי אסף ,"לתולדות היהודים באי מלטה", עמ' 113-114):
מליצה טובה וחשובה לשבויים

העם בחר ה לנחלה, נחלת שדי ממרמים,[474] מאלמים אלמים,[475] בחסד וברחמים,[476] שרי צבאות בראש העם,[477] חפצם וישעם להריק שקיהם וצרורות כספיהם, לחונן דלים ואביונים, רחמנים בני רחמנים,[478] ממלכת בה עם בני האיתנים, גוי שומר אמונים,[479] העמדים על הפקדים,[480] גומלים חסדים בני גומלי חסדים,[481] אחינו אנשי גאולתנו אשר בכל עיר ועיר, ובכל מדינה ומדינה, מקום אשר דבר המלך מלכו של עולם ודתו מגיע שמחה וששון ליהודים,[482] ועטרותיהם בראשיהם,[483] עיני העדה לתורה ולתעודה,[484] דייני רבני מדינה ומדינה, ואחריהם כל ישרי לב ,פרנסי מנהיגי קהלות הקדושות, ה' צבאות יגן עליהם וינשאם, כל ימי עולם ככוכבים כולם, אמן.

הלא למשמע אוזן דאבה נפשנו, יום גבר האויב וילחם בישראל, וישב ממנו שם כך וכך נפשות בבת א'[חת], הדוגיאות של מאלטה, זעקו ולא נמלטו.[485] מי שמע כזאת, מי ראה,[486]

הלכו שבי לפני צר[487] בשלשלאות, והיתה לאו"ת ,[488] ואם ד"ל הוא ואין ידו משגת[489] כי חלה, ורבה חלחלה בקהלה, סוערה כמו הרה, ובאו בנים עד משב"ר[490] בכסף עובר, לעבדים ולשפחות במעולה שבערכין לא בפחות, ושוביהם החזיקו בם ותעל קצבתם לט'ו אלפ גר'[491] מן העבדה כי כבדה מאד,[492] השביעום במרורים, בחורים טחון נשאו באיי העברים[493], וילדי נכרים וזקנים בעץ רועץ כשלו,[494] במי שחו אם הבנהרים,[495]

[473] Based on Genesis 43:14.

[474] על פי איוב לא, ב.
[475] על פי בראשית לז, ז.
[476] על פי הושע ב, כא.
[477] על פי דברים כ, ט.
[478] על פי ספר החינוך, מצוה מב (ג) :"וכמעט שמעיד על עצמו שאינו מבני ישראל, כי הם רחמנים בני רחמנים."
[479] על פי ישעיהו כו, ב: 'פִּתְחוּ שְׁעָרִים וְיָבֹא גוֹי צַדִּיק שֹׁמֵר אֱמֻנִים'.
[480] על פי במדבר ז, ב.
[481] יבמות, דף עט, ע"א.
[482] מליצה בהיפוך משמעות על פי אסתר ח, יא עם ד, ג :'וּבְכָל מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דְּבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מַגִּיעַ אֵבֶל גָּדוֹל לַיְּהוּדִים וְצוֹם וּבְכִי וּמִסְפֵּד שַׂק וָאֵפֶר יֻצַּע לָרַבִּים'.
[483] על פי ברכות דף יז, ע"א: 'העולם הבא אין בו לא אכילה ולא שתיה ולא פריה ורביה ולא משא ומתן ולא קנאה ולא שנאה ולא תחרות, אלא צדיקים יושבין ועטרותיהם בראשיהם ונהנים מזיו השכינה.'
[484] על פי שמות כד, ז עם ישעיהו ח, כ.
[485] הסופר יצר כאן משחק מלים בין המילה "מאלטה" לפועל "נמלטו.""
[486] על פי ישעיהו סו, ח.
[487] על פי איכה א, ה.
[488] מליצה על פי בראשית ט, יג :' אֶת קַשְׁתִּי נָתַתִּי בֶּעָנָן וְהָיְתָה לְאוֹת בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבֵין הָאָרֶץ'. הערך המספרי של או"ת הוא 407, כנראה הסכום שנדרש עבור כל שבוי.
[489] מליצה על פי ויקרא יד, כא: ' וְאִם דַּל הוּא וְאֵין יָדוֹ מַשֶּׂגֶת וְלָקַח כֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד אָשָׁם לִתְנוּפָה לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו וְעִשָּׂרוֹן סֹלֶת אֶחָד בָּלוּל בַּשֶּׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה וְלֹג שָׁמֶן. ' הערך המספרי של ד"ל הוא 34, מספר השבויים,וראה להלן הערה 502.
[490] על פי מלכים ב' יט, ג: ' וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו כֹּה אָמַר חִזְקִיָּהוּ יוֹם צָרָה וְתוֹכֵחָה וּנְאָצָה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי בָאוּ בָנִים עַד מַשְׁבֵּר וְכֹחַ אַיִן לְלֵדָה.' כלומר, לא עצרו לשלם סכום כה גבוה.
[491] 15,000 גרוש.
[492] מליצה על פי שמות ב, כג עם בראשית יח, כ: 'וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים הָהֵם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיֵּאָנְחוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הָעֲבֹדָה וַיִּזְעָקוּ וַתַּעַל שַׁוְעָתָם אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים מִן הָעֲבֹדָה'.
[493] בתוך הביטוי "אִיֵּי הָעִבְרִים" מסתתר צימוד שונה עיצור וצימוד שונה תנועה עם במדבר כא ,יא 'וַיִּסְעוּ מֵאֹבֹת וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּעִיֵּי הָעֲבָרִים בַּמִּדְבָּר אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי מוֹאָב מִמִּזְרַח הַשָּׁמֶשׁ'.
[494] מְלִיצָה בלשון היפוך, לא איי העברים כי אם איי מאלטה שהיו לאיי העברים. על פי איכה ה, יג: ' בַּחוּרִים טְחוֹן נָשָׂאוּ וּנְעָרִים בָּעֵץ כָּשָׁלוּ'.
[495] על פי חבקוק ג, ח: 'הֲבִנְהָרִים חָרָה יְקֹוָק אִם בַּנְּהָרִים אַפֶּךָ אִם בַּיָּם עֶבְרָתֶךָ כִּי תִרְכַּב עַל סוּסֶיךָ מַרְכְּבֹתֶיךָ יְשׁוּעָה'.

ונשים נרמסים מקול מחצצים[496] ברעב ובצמא על האדמה שוכבים, בין שפתים[497] פשטה, ועורה וחגורה על חלצים,[498] על זה היה דוה לבנו[499], מי נתן קהלא[!] קדושה למשסה בעבודה קשה, וישראל לבוזזים בחומר ובלבנים,[500] האוכלים למעדנים? ואם עוד רבות בשנים ח'ו[501] ימקו בארצות אויביהם, לולי ה' צבאות אשר ראה בעניים, ד"ל שמח[502] ואיש צמח להם קרן ישועה , ויתנו להם יד לשלוח מהם שנים גרגרים בראש אמיר[503] מובילי כתבא דנא,[504] אנשי אמונה לכתת בגלותם מעיר לעיר ומאפרכיא לאפרכיא , בקול נהי ונהיה , והנם צווחי בייא בייא, כי ככרוכיא,[505] הנהיה כדבר הזה, או הנשמע למעצבה מדת פורענות מרובה ממדה טובה,[506] מכ"כ ריאליש[507] עובר לסוחר,ובבל תאחר! ויבאו על העיר הזו , על עם יגע ורפא[!] ידים, בעקב כמה כתות של שבויים אחרים, לקוטי בתר לקוטי[508] ובזוזי דבזוזי,[509] ואין זה גם מרוע מזלם, כי לא מצאו אנשי חיל ידיהם כימי עולם, לצאת ידי חובתם לפי כסף מקנתם, כי רב הוא, ולא יכלו להתאפק, לקולם כים יהמה,[510] ולחשם בלחצם,[511] וגם ראינו את הלחש צרת נפשם להעבירם על דת, מלבד חלול שבת, ובמראה התהפכו צירנו עלינו, וכפי דוחק השעה צמצמנו עצמנו ופרענו בעדם סך כך וכך, כיד ה' הטובה עלינו, זולת צדה לדרכם, כי רב הדרך מאד, ועתה אליכם המצוה הזאת הבונים,[512] החלש יאמר גבור אני[513] להחיש מפלט להם מסער,[514] כמ"ש[515] לא ירדנו בפרך לעיניך[516] והאיש הירא ורך הלבב[517] ימלא את כפו טוב, מלא כף נחת[518] בעין יפה, ושב ורפא[519] למחלתם, לקרא לשבוים דרור [520] ואורח מישור, ומלאכי שלם, שלוחי מצוה, ההולכים בלא כח שחות, אשר מר יבכיון,[521] כבבת תחיון,[522] ותחזקנה ידיהם בעד אחיהם , אסירי עני וברזל,[523] ועיניהם תלויות, צופיות כוס ישועות[524] מיקבי צדקתכם, ותקות חוט[525] של חסד מגרני צדקתכם, ובשכר זאת אל חי

[496] שופטים ה, יא.
[497] על פי תהלים סח,יד 'אִם תִּשְׁכְּבוּן "בֵּין שְׁפַתָּיִם" כַּנְפֵי יוֹנָה נֶחְפָּה בַכֶּסֶף וְאֶבְרוֹתֶיהָ בִּירַקְרַק חָרוּץ'.
[498] על פי ישעיהו לב,יא: 'חִרְדוּ שַׁאֲנַנּוֹת רְגָזָה בֹּטְחוֹת פְּשֹׁטָה וְעֹרָה וַחֲגוֹרָה עַל חֲלָצָיִם'. צירוף הפסוקים מתהלים (הערה 497) ומישעיהו יוצרים מליצה בלשון היפוך במקום לשכון בטח בין כנפי היונה רפודים כסף ואבנים יקרות, השבויים שוכבים ערומים וחסרי כל.
[499] על פי איכה ה, יז.
[500] על דרך שמות א, יד.
[501] חס וחלילה.
[502] כלומר השלושים וארבעה שבויים שמחו.
[503] על פי ישעיהו פרק יז, ו :'וְנִשְׁאַר בּוֹ עוֹלֵלֹת כְּנֹקֶף זַיִת שְׁנַיִם שְׁלֹשָׁה גַּרְגְּרִים בְּרֹאשׁ אָמִיר אַרְבָּעָה חֲמִשָּׁה בִּסְעִפֶיהָ פֹּרִיָּה נְאֻם ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל'.
[504] כתב זה.
[505] קידושין דף מד, ע"א. החסידה ידועה בקולה הצווחני.
[506] על פי תוספתא מסכת סוטה (מהדורת ש. ליברמן, תוספתא, מסכת נשים,בית המדרש לרבנים, ניו יורק,תשס"א, כרך ב) פרק ד, הלכה א. השובים דורשים דמי פדיון גבוהים מן הרגיל, דבר המוביל לחורבנם של השבויים.
[507] מכל כך ריאליש, מסכום כה גבוה של ריאלים עוברים לסוחר.
[508] מלקטים אחרי מלקטים.תענית דף ו, ע"ב ועוד.
[509] בוזזים אחרי בוזזים.סנהדרין דף צד, ע"א.
[510] על פי ירמיהו ו, כג.
[511] על פי ישעיהו כו,טז.
[512] על פי מלאכי ב, א: 'וְעַתָּה אֲלֵיכֶם הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת הַכֹּהֲנִים'.
[513] על פי יואל ד, י.
[514] על פי תהלים נה, ט: 'אָחִישָׁה מִפְלָט לִי מֵרוּחַ סֹעָה מִסָּעַר'.
[515] כמה שנאמר.
[516] ויקרא כה, נג.
[517] על פי דברים כ, ח.
[518] על פי קהלת ד, ו.
[519] על פי ישעיהו ו, י.
[520] ישעיהו סא, א.
[521] על פי ישעיהו לג, ז: 'הֵן אֶרְאֶלָּם צָעֲקוּ חֻצָה מַלְאֲכֵי שָׁלוֹם מַר יִבְכָּיוּן.'
[522] מליצה על פי שמות א, כב: 'וַיְצַו פַּרְעֹה לְכָל עַמּוֹ לֵאמֹר כָּל הַבֵּן הַיִּלּוֹד הַיְאֹרָה תַּשְׁלִיכֻהוּ וְכָל הַבַּת תְּחַיּוּן'. והמשמעות כאן תחיו אותם כבבת עיניכם.
[523] על פי תהלים קז, י.
[524] תהלים קטז, יג.
[525] מליצה על פי יהושע ח, יב.

בקרבכם יחכה לחננכם, ירום לרחמכם, וישבית עול ענים מעל צואריכם, ויפרוש סוכת שלום עליכם,[526] ועינינו ועיניכם תחזנה בבנין אפריון[527] וההראל,[528] ובא לציון גואל.[529]

Document VII

Translation
Epistle 202, p. 234 (published, in part, without a scientific apparatus, by Assaf, "More on the History of the Jews in the Island of Malta", in Id., *In the Tents of Jacob*, pp. 113-14):

A Good and Important Intercession for Prisoners

The nation chose God as an inheritance, the inheritance of the Lord from the heavens[530], they are binding their sheaves[531] with loving-kindness and mercy[532], the princes of the hosts, leading the people[533]. Their desire and their salvation lies in emptying their sacks and the silver in their bundles to show compassion for the poor and the indigent. Merciful ones the progeny of the merciful ones[534], kingdom in which the sons of the mighty dwell. A nation that keeps faith[535]. Those who lead the Israelites "who are numbered"[536], purveyors of loving-kindness the offspring of purveyors of loving-kindness[537], our brethren, the men who are our redeemers who [dwell] in every city and every country, every place the word and law of the King, the King of the World, reaches. Joy and happiness for the Jews[538], and their crowns are upon their heads[539]. The eyes of the congregation [are upraised] to the Law and to give

526 על פי תלמוד ירושלמי (חמו"ל, וילנא, 1926) מסכת ברכות פרק ד: 'בנוי לתלפיות תל שכל הפיות מתפללין עליו בברכה בקרית שמע ובתפלה בברכה בונה ירושלם בתפילה אלהי דוד ובונה ירושלם בקרית שמע פורש סוכת שלום עלינו ועל עמו ישראל ועל ירושלם'.
527 בהשראת שיר השירים ג, ט-י.
528 הראל הוא המזבח (יחזקאל מג, טו) אך יכול גם הר הבית או ירושלים כולה.
529 על פי ישעיהו נט, כ

530 Based on Job 31:2.
531 Based on Genesis 37:7.
532 Based on Hosea 2:21.
533 Based on Deuteronomy 20:9.
534 Based on *The Book of Education* 42:3: "He practically testifies of himself that he is not an Israelite, for they are merciful ones, the progeny of merciful ones".
535 Based on Isaiah 26:2: "Open the gates that the righteous nation may enter, the nation that keeps faith" (NIV).
536 Numbers 7:2.
537 bYevamot 79a.
538 Based on Esther 8:11 (and an inversion of ibidem, 4:3: "And in every province, wherever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes" (AKJV).
539 Based on bBerakhot 17a: "The world to come has neither eating nor drinking nor procreation nor business negotiations nor envy nor hatred nor competition. Rather, the righteous sit, with their crowns on their heads, enjoying the glow of the Divine presence".

testimony[540]. The rabbinic decisors, the rabbis of each and every country and after them all the men of integrity, the financial pillars, the leaders of the holy communities, may the Lord of Hosts protect them and uplift them forever, for they are all likened to stars. Amen.

When this news reached our ears we lamented: on the day of the enemy's triumph, when the Maltese ships fought against the Israelites and took many captives[541], so many people at one time. They cried out, but they did not manage to escape[542]. Who has heard of such a thing? Who has seen[543] a nomadic community taken captive by the enemy in chains[544]? And may this be a sign[545], and if he is impoverished and he is unable [to pay the ransom][546] because he is ill and horror has permeated the community, [with emotions as] stormy as a pregnant woman, and the people have reached a crisis[547] lacking money to pay. So they are to become slaves and maidservants sold at an exorbitant price, no less, and their captors have kept them and raised their ransoms to 15,000 kuruş.

They embittered their lives with hard work[548]. The young men have borne the mill in the islands of the Hebrews and the children of Gentiles and old men have stumbled under the wood[549]; in water they swam, if

540 Based on Exodus 24:7 and Isaiah 8:20.
541 Based on Numbers 21:1.
542 There is a wordplay between the name Malta and the Hebrew word for "escape" ("*nimletu*").
543 Based on ibidem, 66:8.
544 Based on Lamentations 1:5.
545 In Hebrew the word for sign is "*ot*". In the original manuscript this word was emphasized, perhaps in order to allude to the sum of money demanded for each of the captives-over 400 kuruş. The numeric value of the Hebrew letters that comprise the word "*ot*" is 407. The phrase is a play on Genesis 9:13: "I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth" (NIV).
546 In Hebrew the word for impoverished is "*dal*". In the original manuscript this word was emphasized to denote the number of the captives. The numeric value of the Hebrew letters that comprise the word "*dal*" is 34. The phrase is a play on Leviticus 14:21: "If, however, they are poor and cannot afford these, they must take one male lamb as a guilt offering to be waved to make atonement for them, together with a tenth of an *efah* of the finest flour mixed with olive oil for a grain offering, a log of oil" (NIV).
547 Based on 2 Kings 19:3: "And they said to him, Thus said Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy; for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth" (NKJV). The Hebrew word for crisis also means the birthing stool.
548 A play on Exodus as well as Genesis 18:20: "And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up to God by reason of the bondage" (NKJV).
549 Based on Lamentations 5:13: "Young men toil at the millstones; boys stagger under loads of wood" (NIV). There is an inverted wordplay here as well, as the place "Iyei ha-'Avarim" of Numbers 21:11 is homophonically rendered "the islands of the Hebrews", that is, Malta, where the captive Jews have been taken.

not in rivers[550]. And women are trampled by the voice of the archers[551]. Because of famine and thirst they lie on the ground between the "sheepfolds"[552]. Stripped to the skin with just a belt to cover their loins[553]. Concerning this our hearts ache[554]. Who gave over this holy community to be ravaged by hard labor? And Israel is plundered and given to hard work with bricks and mortar[555] by those who eat delicacies. They would have been forced to rot for many more years, heaven forbid, in the lands of their enemies if Lord of Hosts had not seen their devastating plight. The poor man[556] rejoiced since a ray of salvation appeared in the form of a man, and they were given the opportunity to send "two berries in the top of the uppermost bough"[557], the bearers of this letter, men of faith, who will trudge in exile from city to city, from region to region, moaning in a mournful tone. For they will be, and they are, crying "vai vai", as like a crane they have become[558]. Has such a sorrowful thing ever been or heard? For the measure of destruction has outweighed the proper measure[559]. [They must collect] such-and-such reales in cash, and without delay. And they have come to this city[560], to a people that is fatigued and weak because [we have dealt with] several other groups of captives, collection after collection[561], the despoilers of the despoiled[562]. And this is but another instance of their evil misfortune for they have not managed to find mighty men of valor of the days of old to pay their obligations, according to their asking price for it is exorbitant. And they cannot restrain their cries, like

550 Based on Habakkuk 3:8: "Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? was your anger against the rivers? was your wrath against the sea, that you did ride on your horses and your chariots of salvation?" (AKJV).

551 Judges 5:11.

552 Psalms 68:14. The verse reads "Even those who lived among the sheepfolds found treasures-doves with wings of silver and feathers of gold" (NLT). Here the captives lay in the sheepfolds but they were stripped bare, not covered by wings of a dove. Furthermore, they clearly had no gold or silver.

553 Based on Isaiah 32:11: "Tremble, you women that are at ease; be troubled, you careless ones: strip you, and make you bore, and gird sackcloth on your loins" (AKJV).

554 Based on Lamentations 5:17.

555 Based on Exodus 1:14: "They made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly" (NIV).

556 Here again the word "*dal*" (poor) is used in Hebrew to allude to the thirty-four captives.

557 Based on Isaiah 17:6: "Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, said the Lord God of Israel" (AKJV).

558 bQidushin 44a. The crane was known for its high-pitched, shrieking cry.

559 Based on tSotah 4:1 (S. Lieberman Edition, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, 2001, *Nashim* vol. II). The captors are demanding more than usual, which leads to the destruction of the captives.

560 Jerusalem.

561 bTa`anit 6b *et al.*

562 bSanhedrin 94a.

the sea they roar[563], and they pray devoutly[564] in their distress. For we have also seen their prayers, the anguish in their souls over having been forced to transgress the law, in addition to their desecrating the Sabbath. And when we saw this, our insides writhed in pain, and according to the needs of the hour we made do with less ourselves and paid on their behalf such-and-such an amount, commensurate with the good God has given us as well as provender for their journey, for their road is long, and now the good deed falls upon you, the builders[565]. The weak one will say I am a hero[566] and hasten to provide refuge for them from the storm[567], as it says in the Torah "he shall not rule with rigor over him in thy sight"[568]. And the one who fears [the Lord] and is softhearted[569] will give him a handful, for better is a handful of rest given generously [than both the hands full of labor striving after wind][570]. And He will return and heal their illnesses[571], proclaim the captives' liberty[572] and [grant them an] even path. And the envoys of Salem those emissaries sent to carry out the commandments, those who walk wearily, downcast, who cry bitterly[573] like the pupil (of the eye), may you grant them life[574] and strengthen their hands [so that they can act] on behalf of their brethren, the prisoners of poverty and iron[575], whose eyes are affixed on you hoping for a goblet of salvation[576] from your vineyards of righteousness, and the hope of a thread[577] of loving-kindness from your granaries of righteousness and in recompense for this, may God dwell among you, wait to show you compassion, raise you up to show you mercy, and remove the yoke of their poverty from your necks. And may he spread a booth of peace over you[578]. So both of our eyes - yours and ours -

563 Based on Jeremiah 6:23.

564 Isaiah 26:16.

565 Based on Malachi 2:1: "And now, O you priests, this commandment is for you" (AKJV).

566 Based on Joel 4:10.

567 Based on Psalms 55:9: "I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm" (NIV).

568 Leviticus 25:53.

569 Based on Deuteronomy 20:8.

570 Based on Ecclesiastes 4:6.

571 Isaiah 6:10.

572 Isaiah 61:1.

573 That is, of Jerusalem. The phrase is a play on Isaiah 33:7: "Look, their brave men cry aloud in the streets; the envoys of peace weep bitterly" (NIV). "Peace" ("*shalom*") is replaced by the similar sounding "Salem".

574 A play on Exodus 1:22: "And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive" (AKJV). The Hebrew for "pupil" literally means "the daughter of the eye".

575 Based on Psalms 107:10.

576 Psalms 115:13.

577 A play on Joshua 8:12.

578 Based on yBerakhot 4 (no publisher listed, Vilna, 1926): "Built as 'Talpiyot' - a hill (*tel*) toward which all mouths (*piyot*) turn in blessing, in reciting the Shema, and in prayer: in the blessing "Who rebuilds Jerusalem" (one of the blessings in the

will see the construction of the palanquin[579] and the altar[580], and may the redeemer come to Zion[581].

Document VIII

איגרת 205, עמ' 237 (פורסמה בחלקה ללא אפראט מדעי על ידי ש. אסף, "לתולדות היהודים באי מלטה", עמ' 113) :
(נתפס בדרכו לארץ ישראל על יד אבירי מאלטה,והובא למכירה באלכסנדריה של מצרים)

שלומי אמוני ישראל, זרע קדש עם בחר ה' לנחלה, נחלת שדי, ממרומים מאלמים אלמים[582], צדקות ומעוז ישועות להשביע בצחצחות,[583] נפשות יבשות, מצדיקי הרבים ככוכבים[584] ,מאירים לארץ ולדרים, התרים מנוחה והנחה ליהודים, גומלי חסדים, רחמנים בני רחמנים,[585] חומה ומחסה לעניים ואביונים, לכל שואל אם דך ואם עני עמך, לקנות שם ,ושארית וטוב אחרית, השרידים אשר ה' קורא[586] עם זו יצרתי לי,[587] הנה הנם קהלות קדושות וטהורות, והיו למאורות ראשי אלפי בני ישראל בכל עיר ועיר, מדינה ומדינה,[588] פרנסים, ממונים, יועצים , אל מכון ישגא,[589] ועל צבא מטה עין תהלתם, החכמים השלמים, מרביצי תורה, ביניהם אתם, ה' תשמרם, ויתענגו על רב שלום, עד עילום [!] אנסו'.[590]
אחרי עתרת שלום ואמת,[591] כמשפט שם לאוהבי שם תהלתם ,[592] אותותינו אלה בלכתם ילכו לדבר צדקתם ,על אודות מוביל כתבא דנא,[593] נעים זמירות מישראל[594] מבנן של קדושים וכו'[לי], שיצא מארץ מולדתו, בנדר שנדר על נפשו ללכת לא"י ת"ו ,[595] להשתחוות ולהשתטח על קברות הצדיקי'[ם] ועל כותל מערבי, ויהי בהיותו בדרך אניה בלב ים,[596] קפצו עליו לסטים ושוללי ים <ותפול שבא>[597] שבו אותו ולקחו כל מה שהיה,

Grace after Meals); in the prayer of “God of David” and “Who rebuilds Jerusalem; in reciting the Shem‘a [with the recitation of the accompanying blessing of]. Who spreads the booth of peace over us, over His people Israel, and over Jerusalem”.

579 Based on Song of Songs 3:9-10.

580 The Hebrew word “*harel*” means altar in Ezekiel 43:15, but it can also refer to Jerusalem or, quite literally, the Mountain of God, the Temple Mount.

581 Based on Isaiah 59:20.

582 על פי בראשית לו, ז.

583 זהרורי אור. וראה ישעיהו נח,יא וכן אלשיך על מלאכי פרק ג 'להשביע בצחצחות נפש עמל בעמלה של תורה, והאנשים ההולכים בחשך וילאו למצוא הפתח.'

584 דניאל יב, ג, וראה מדרש זוטא - קהלת (וילנה תרפ"ה ,מהדורת שלמה בובר), פרשה יב :' והכוכבים. אלו הרבנים. דכתיב מצדיקי הרבים ככוכבים'.

585 ספר החינוך, מצווה מב, ג.

586 על פי אברבנאל בראשית (וורשה תרכ"ב), פרק טו: 'וידמה שהעיד הקדוש ברוך הוא לאברהם שהאומה היוצאת ממנו תתדמה לשמים בשש בחינות. הבחינה הא' כי כמו שהגלגל בכללו הוא ספיריי נכבד בגשמותו ויש חלקים ממנו מאירים והם החלק מובחר שבגלגל שהוא הכוכב ככה האומה הישראלית תהיה בכללה שלימה ונכבדת כמעשה לבנת הספיר וכבר ימצאו בה פרטים מובחרים מהם הנביאים החסידים השרידים אשר ה' קורא שהם יותר מעולים משאר אנשי האומה והם המאירים לארץ ולדרים עליה וכבר העיר על הבחינה הזאת דניאל ע"ה באמרו (דניאל י"ב, ג') והמשכילי' יזהירו כזהר הרקיע ומצדיקי הרבי' ככוכבים לעולם ועד'.

587 ישעיהו מג, כא.

588 על פי אסתר ח, יז.

589 דניאל ג, לא

590 אמן,נצח ,סלה ועד.

591 ירמיהו לג, ו.

592 משחק מילים, שם הוא גם שמו של נח אבי העברים.

593 מוביל כתב זה.

594 חזן. על פי התיאור של המלך דוד בשמואל ב' כג, א.

595 לארץ ישראל תבנה ותכונן.

596 משלי ל, יט.

597 כלומר שבאים ,על פי איוב א ,טו: ' וַתִּפֹּל שְׁבָא וַתִּקָּחֵם וְאֶת הַנְּעָרִים הִכּוּ לְפִי חָרֶב וָאִמָּלְטָה רַק אֲנִי לְבַדִּי לְהַגִּיד לָךְ.' המלים בסוגריים משולשים נכתבו מעל לשורה כאפשרות נוספת לניסוח.

ונשאר ערם ועריה וחשופי שת,[598] ולא די זה, אסרו אותו ברהטים,[599] והביאו אותו פה מאלטה, ומכרו אותו ממכרת עבד,[600] ונפל בידי אדונים קשים ומרים כלענה עד מאד, שהיה שולחו לעסוק בעבודה קשה בחמר ובלבנים, ונשא סבל[601] על שכמו , אבנים גדולות ויקרות, מבוקר לערב יכת, עירום ויחף, רעב וצמא ושוכב על הקרקע, והשוטרים מכים אותו מכות גדולות על גבו, עד שנשפך דמו לארץ, ובשרו כדונג נמס[602], ועבר עליו צרות רבות ורעות ,וה' לא עזר ,רחמיו וחסדיו ליראי שמו, ונכמרו רחמיו על הנז'[כר] ונזדמן א'[חד] ערל, וקנה אותו מידי אדונים קשים להוליכו לנא אמון,[603] בתנאי שיפרעו לערל הנז'[כר] מקופה של צדקה, לכן בדעו ובמטו מנייכו,[604] בהגיע הנז'[כר] למחניכם הקדוש והטהור, נתון תתנו צדה לדרכו, ושערי צדקותיכם פתוח תפתחו ,כדי לשלם נדרו שנדר על נפשו, והענק תעניקוהו, ומי האיש הירא ורך הלבב[605] יחוס ויחמול על הנז'[כר], וזה חסדיכם אשר תעשו ,לשלוח לנז'[כר] במהרה כצדה לדרכו, כדי לשלם נדרו, ובשכר מצוה זאת, אלדי"ם חיים ומלך עולם יזכה לחננכם במעגלי הצדק והישר על דבר כבוד שמו כחפצכם וכ'[ולי].

Document VIII

Translation
Epistle 205, p. 237 (Published, in part by Assaf, “More on the History of the Jews in the Island of Malta”, in Id., *In the Tents of Jacob*, p.113, without a scientific apparatus):

(Seized on his way to the land of Israel by Maltese knights, and brought to Alexandria, Egypt for sale)

Faithful believers of Israel, sacred seed, the people chosen by God as His inheritance, the inheritance of the Lord from the heavens, binding their sheaves[606], [performing] good deeds, and a fortress of salvation, to satisfy with your beams of light parched souls[607], those who provide the public with merit, like stars[608] illuminating the earth and those who inhabit it, those who seek out rest and relaxation for the Jews, performers of loving-kindness, merciful ones the progeny of merciful ones[609], a wall and a refuge for your poor and the destitute, for anyone who asks, whether from among the oppressed or from among the poor of your nation, to gain a name and progeny

598 על פי יחזקאל טז,ז עם ישעיהו כ, ד.

599 על פי שיר השירים ז, ו.

600 מליצה מהופכת על פי ויקרא כה, מב : 'כִּי עֲבָדַי הֵם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם לֹא יִמָּכְרוּ מִמְכֶּרֶת עָבֶד.'

601 על פי שמות א, יד עם מלכים א' ה, כט.

602 על פי תהלים כב, טו.

603 אלכסנדריה של מצרים.

604 אנו מבקשים מכם.

605 דברים כ, ח.

606 Based on Genesis 36:7.

607 Based on Isaiah 58:11. See also R. Mosheh Alshekh’s *Commentary to Malachi*, chapter 3: “to satisfy, with beams of light, the soul that toils in the labor of the Torah, while those who walk in darkness strive to find the doorway”.

608 Based on Daniel 12:3. See also *Midrash Zuta: Qohelet*, Salomon Buber Edition, Vilna, 1925, 12: “The stars - these are the rabbis, as it is stated: those who lead many to righteousness [will shine] like the stars”.

609 *The Book of Education* 42:3.

for the benefit of the last remnants that God calls[610] "this nation I created for Myself"[611]. Behold, they are holy and pure communities and their leaders were a light to the thousands of children of Israel in each and every city and in each and every country[612], financial pillars, appointed ones, advisors. To the Temple may it rise above[613], and on the host below rests the guarding eye of their glory. The perfect scholars, disseminators of Torah, you are among them. May the Lord protect you, and May you take pleasure in much peace forever A.N.S.V.[614].

After [offering a blessing of] abundance, peace, and truth[615] as is the law of Shem to those who love their glorious name[616], these letters of ours go forth to speak their righteousness concerning the bearer of this epistle, a sweet singer of Israel[617], the son of holy people etc., who left his native land to fulfill a vow he made to go to the Land of Israel, may it be rebuilt and be re-established, to bow and prostrate himself upon the graves of the righteous ones and on the Western Wall. But when he was sailing in his ship in the midst of the sea[618], bandits and pirates fell upon him <And the Sabeans fell *upon them*>[619] They took him prisoner and they took all that he possessed, leaving him naked and bare, with his backside exposed to the elements[620]. And as if this were not enough, they chained him to the water trough[621] and

[610] Based on Don Yitzhak Abarbanel, *Commentary to Genesis*, Warsaw, 1862, chapter 15:

It seems that the Almighty attests to Abraham that the nation that shall descend from him will be akin to the heavens in six ways. The first way is that just as the sphere as a whole is sapphire-like, sublime in its materiality, and has some parts that shine - these are the choicest parts of the sphere, that is, the star - so too the nation of Israel will be, as a whole, complete and sublime, like the sapphire brickwork, and shall have even choicer individuals, the pious prophets, the remnants who God calls, who are more refined than other members of the nation. They illuminate the world and its inhabitants. Daniel (12:3) already commented on this aspect when he said: "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever" (NIV).

[611] Isaiah 43:21.

[612] Based on Esther 8:17.

[613] Daniel 3:31.

[614] Acronym standing for *Amen. Netzah. Selah. Va-'ad*, a well-known concluding phrase. This phrase not only indicates the author's hearty assent, as "Amen" by itself would, but further asserts that nothing can shake his declaration. It stands forever (*netzah*) and ever (*'ad*).

[615] Jeremiah 33:6.

[616] The word for name in Hebrew is "*shem*", but this was also the ancestral name of Noah's son, the father of all the Semitic nations. Thus, the author plays with this homonym in order to express his wishes for the addressee.

[617] A cantor, based on the description of King David in 2 Samuel 23:1.

[618] Based on Proverbs 30:19.

[619] See Job 1:15 and the remainder of the verse: "and the Sabeans attacked and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you" (NIV). The triangle brackets appear in superscript as an alternative version.

[620] Ezekiel 16:7 with Isaiah 20:4.

[621] Based on Song of Songs 7:6.

brought him here to Malta and sold him in a slave auction[622]. There he fell into the hands of brutal masters, who were verily as bitter as wormwood, for they set him to perform hard labor with bricks and mortar, and to shoulder heavy loads[623] of large precious stones. From dawn till dusk he was beaten and he went naked and barefoot; he starved and was thirsty, and lay on the ground, and the guards would beat him brutally on the back until the blood flowed to the earth and his flesh melted like beeswax[624]. Many evil trials visited him, but God did not restrain the pity and loving-kindness He has those who fear His name, and His mercy went out to this man, and an uncircumcised man providentially happened to come along and purchase him from his harsh masters to take him to Alexandria the Great[625] on condition that he would be repaid out of the charity fund. Therefore, you should know and we plead that when this man arrives at your pure and holy encampments freely give him sustenance for his journey and open the gates of your righteousness to pay the vow that he took upon himself, and verily grant him this. For who is the man who fears [the Lord] and is softhearted, who will have mercy and compassion for this man[626]? For this is the loving-kindness that you should perform: send [funds] to this man quickly for sustenance on his journey so that he pays his vow. And as recompense for the performance of this good deed, the living God, the King of the World will endow you [with the opportunity to live] in the circles of his justice and integrity for honoring His name, as you wish, etc.

Document IX

איגרת 207, עמ' 239:

(זוג זקנים נשבו על ידי אבירי מאלטה ואולצו לעבוד עבודת פרך)

נחלת שדי ממרמים,[627] מאלמים אלמים,[628] צדקות ומעוז ישועות, להשביע בצחצחות[629] נפשות יבשות, אנשי אמת, צדק ילין בם,[630] ועתה מרביצים ברצי כסף[631], בכוסף נמרץ , רץ לקראת רץ ירוץ [632] וכ'[ולי'].
על אודות איש זקן עוטה מעיל [633] התפארת והענות, אשר בצאתו הוא ואשתו, ותפל עליהם שבא ותקחם[634] ויביאום אל הר צער ,[635] איי מאלטה, וימכרום ממכרת עבד[636] לאדונים קשים, ויעבד אותם בפרך במכות

[622] Inverted phraseology based on Leviticus 25:42: "For they are my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen".

[623] Based on Exodus 1:14 and 1 Kings 5:29.

[624] Based on Psalms 22:15.

[625] See *Genesis Rabbah* 1:1 for the rabbinic use of the name "No-Amon" to denote Alexandria.

[626] Deuteronomy 20:8.

[627] על פי איוב לא, ב.

[628] בראשית לז, ז.

[629] זהרורי אור. על פי ישעיהו נח,יא, וראה אלשיך מלאכי פרק ג:'להשביע בצחצחות נפש עמל בעמלה של תורה, והאנשים ההולכים בחשך וילאו למצוא הפתח'.

[630] על פי ישעיהו א,כא: 'אֵיכָה הָיְתָה לְזוֹנָה קִרְיָה נֶאֱמָנָה מְלֵאֲתִי מִשְׁפָּט צֶדֶק יָלִין בָּהּ וְעַתָּה מְרַצְּחִים'.

[631] על פי תהלים סח, א.

[632] ירמיהו נא, לא.

[633] על פי שמואל א' כח ,יד: 'וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַה תָּאֳרוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר אִישׁ זָקֵן עֹלֶה וְהוּא עֹטֶה מְעִיל וַיֵּדַע שָׁאוּל כִּי שְׁמוּאֵל הוּא וַיִּקֹּד אַפַּיִם אַרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ'.

[634] כלומר שבאים ,על פי איוב א, טו :'וַתִּפֹּל שְׁבָא וַתִּקָּחֵם וְאֶת הַנְּעָרִים הִכּוּ לְפִי חָרֶב וָאִמָּלְטָה רַק אֲנִי לְבַדִּי לְהַגִּיד לָךְ'.

[635] הר שעיר , ממלכת אדום.

[636] על פי ויקרא כה, מב.

גדולות, ובחומר ובלבנים,[637] ובאבנים, מעונים בכבלי ברזל, מבקר לערב יכתו, ערומים וחשופי שת לחורב היום ולקרח בלילה, עד שהאדימו ונמק בשרם מעל עצמם כפלח הרמון,[638] לכן אלונינו מסובלים תורה ומצות, חושו ועשו על האנשים האלה, להשפיע עליהם מחסדיכם , ולמלאת את ידם, ואנחנו לא נחדל מלקטה למלאכת השמים, והיה בעברם דרך גבול משכן כבודם, עשו נא אתם צדקה, נטו נדבות חסדיכם, משמי קדשיכם תטיפון עליהם יורה ומלקוש בראשון,[639] ואל תאחרו אותם, למען ישובו אל ביתם כי נשיהם צופיות הליכות ביתם,[640] ובשכר זאת תשלו משלות[641] מלאות ברכות.

Document IX

Translation
Epistle 207, p. 239:

(A pair of elders captured by Maltese knights and were forced into hard labor)

The inheritance of the Lord from the heavens[642], binding their sheaves[643], [performing] righteous deeds, and a fortress of deliverance to satisfy with their beams of light parched souls[644]. Men of truth, may righteousness lodge among them[645]. And now may they disperse sprays of silver[646] with fervent yearning; may they rush to [perform the righteous deed], scampering, scurrying, [above all] hurrying, etc.[647].

Concerning the old man wrapped in a coat[648] of splendor and suffering who upon departing with his wife was taken into captivity and brought[649] to be imprisoned in the mountains of Edom, the isles of Malta, where they were sold as slaves at auction[650] to cruel masters and subjected to hard labor, with arduous beatings, and with bricks and mortar[651] and stones.

[637] על פי שמות א, יד.
[638] על פי שיר השירים ד, ג.
[639] על פי דברים יא, יד: 'וְנָתַתִּי מְטַר אַרְצְכֶם בְּעִתּוֹ יוֹרֶה וּמַלְקוֹשׁ וְאָסַפְתָּ דְגָנֶךָ וְתִירֹשְׁךָ וְיִצְהָרֶךָ'.
[640] לא ברור מן האמור אם אנשים אחרים נשלחו כדי לאסוף כסף למען השבויים ונשי השליחים מצפות להם, או שהשבויים עצמם נשלחו לחופשי "תחת התחייבות" ונשיהם מצפות להם בביתם.
[641] תשאלו משאלות? או שמא תשלו משלות מלשון תהיו שלווים.

[642] Based on Job 31:2.
[643] Genesis 37:7.
[644] Based on Isaiah 58:11. See also R. Mosheh Alshekh's *Commentary to Malachi*, chapter 3: "to satisfy, with beams of light, the soul that toils in the labor of the Torah, while those who walk in darkness strive to find the doorway".
[645] Based on Isaiah 1:21: "How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers" (AKJV).
[646] Based on Psalms 68:1.
[647] Jeremiah 51:31.
[648] Based on 1 Samuel 28:14: "What does he look like? he asked. An old man wearing a robe is coming up, she said. Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground" (NIV).
[649] The words for "Sabeans" and "captors" are homographs. See Job 1:15: "and the Sabeans (captors) attacked and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you" (NIV).
[650] Based on Leviticus 25:42.
[651] Based on Exodus 1:14.

Tortured by iron chains from morning to evening, they were left naked and exposed to the heat of the sun and the cold of the night until their skin turned red and their flesh rotted and peeled off their bodies like slices of pomegranate[652]. Therefore, our mighty oaks, those who carry the burden of the Torah and the commandments hurry and act on behalf of these people, to shower them with your loving-kindness and fill their hands, and we will also not spare ourselves from collecting for this divinely sanctioned cause. So when they pass through your honored dwelling place, please act charitably with them and be inclined to let your kind contributions flow. From your holy firmaments, immediately rain down upon them the first and last rains [of the rainy season][653], and do not delay them, so that they may return to their home. For their wives watch over the doings of their homes[654]. And in recompense for this [good deed] may you be granted all you wish for <alt. may you live quietly and tranquilly>[655] with a life full of blessings.

[652] Based on Song of Songs 4:3.
[653] Based on Deuteronomy 11:14: "That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your corn, and your wine, and your oil" (AKJV)
[654] Based on Proverbs 31:27: "She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness" (NIV). It is not clear here whose wives are "watching over (alone) the affairs of her household", the wives of the emissaries sent to collect funds, or the wives of the captives.
[655] The Hebrew is ambiguous; both alternatives have been presented here.

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